

Personal Summary Of The Calpe Conference 2015

Redefining The Neanderthals

This is a personal summary of my experience of the Calpe 2015 conference. Redefining The Neanderthals. I make no claims to being very knowledgeable on anthropology and the reason for this write up is to conclusively consolidate ideas so I may formulate new ones, especially to ask more questions that when answered will take me a stage further, or in another direction. Despite being written in first person, I am trying to be as objective as possible in presenting the conclusions and questions posited here by referring to what source originally backs or gave me the idea, if there has been one. If there has been, reference is made after each block of text it is consecutively relevant to, to allow for an easier read with an unobstructed flow of text, unlike the constant cluttered referential interruptions which is a very common standard I find in presented papers. Understandably, giving references is the proper thing to do, but as long as they are given as standard, should not perhaps functionalism support easier reading whilst improving text aesthetics along the way? The initial 5 paragraphs are presented as they happened, temporally parallel to when events actually occurred, but towards the end is more of a non successive amalgamation of different points and instances.

The first morning of the conference, Thursday the 24th, could not have started better, with Chris Stringer giving the opening lecture and mentioning the possible introgression of modern humans into neanderthals. I'd already typed a question on my tablet before the conference asking whether the high adult survivorship of west asian neanderthals could have anything to do with the introgression of moderns into neanderthals? I'd asked myself that question whilst reading Milford Wolpoff's and Rachel Caspari's paper, *The Origin Of Modern Humans* (1) in preparation for Calpe 2015, where mention is made of the documented fossil evidence for higher neanderthal survivorship. Neanderthal life spans are known to have lasted as long as modern humans (2), so the latter seemed like a discrepancy of some determinable originating period of a better quality of life being had, that could have been alternatively borne out of cultural convergence, cultural assimilation or cultural inheritance from exogamous interbreeding. Answers that might help prove or disprove the latter would be if we could prove that longer life spans were due to either cultural or biological evolution (also convergently or not), or both. Seeing as Chris brought up the subject of introgression into neanderthals and with no idea if the topic would be brought up again, I passed the question over to him. He constructively answered that we would need more work done gathering fossil evidence than what we have at present to corroborate any such idea. I saw him later and talking in agreement added that we need a strong increase in financed archaeological activity around the world.

(1)

http://www.researchgate.net/publication/257734633_The_Origins_of_Modern_Humans

(2) Mentioning findings by Eric Trinkaus, one of the delegates attending http://www.nytimes.com/2011/01/11/science/11obneanderthal.html?_r=0

Christoph Zollikofer mentioned that in reality fixed species don't exist in the sense that they are human "conveniences" used for interpretation, subjective intra-specific taxonomical categorisations to suit our outlook on biology. I had gone through the same thought processes a few years back and told him later, just after his presentation, that I thought that species were temporal approximations (actually, I'd worked out the term, self replicating biochemical temporal approximations, which you can find on a single Google search page 5 rows down) and he thought that was a good idea. Queried by John Hawks, he answered that there is an enormous difference in characteristics in present day human populations compared to those of the past. I thought that supported multiregionalism, because it encompasses a single potentially breeding population that had been found to have interbred with regional archaic populations such as Denisovans and Neanderthals. It begs the question, are there more undiscovered ancient human groups that form part of the modern human genome? (3) On the theme of what makes a species, Erik Trinkhaus during his lecture gave several examples of how anthropologists tend to over emphasise the dissimilarity between neanderthals and moderns, an argumentation that also supports multiregional theory.

(3) <http://www.nature.com/news/mystery-humans-spiced-up-ancients-sex-lives-1.14196>

Carles Lalueza-Fox, whilst explaining the genetic results of neanderthal fossil individuals mentioned a discrepancy in the results that seemed to him anomalously determine the parentage of one of them, that of a grandparent/child conception. He explained further concluding that neanderthals did not live long enough for a grandparent to have an incestuous conception with grandchildren. I had doubts about his conclusion, asides for the possible evidence there is of neanderthal precociousness relative to comparable maturation in moderns. Given the known longest life spans of the adult survivorship of neanderthals (4) and known contemporary cases of early pregnancies (5) it is conceivable that an incestuous pregnancy between a neanderthal grandparent/child could have taken place. I did ask him during the next tea break to reconsider whether it was just about possible, just not at all probable, that such a pregnancy had taken place, especially because incestuous relationships abound in paedophilic settings. (6) I don't know much about genetics, but despite the results and the available evidence supporting the possibility of an incestuous grandparent child conception, it might be some other thing. In the once common avunculate marriages (7), the marriage between an uncle and a niece

or between an aunt and a nephew, partners have the same genetic relationship as half-siblings or a grandparent and grandchild, sharing on average 25% of their genetic material. Could that possibly be the anomalous result that was obtained?

(4) http://www.nytimes.com/2011/01/11/science/11obneanderthal.html?_r=0

(5) One of many known cases, not probable but possible.

<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3175856/Britain-s-youngest-mum-pregnant-just-11-school-six-weeks-giving-birth-getting-marks.html>

(6) Google search for child incestuous abuse

[https://www.google.co.uk/search?q=child+incestuous+abuse&oq=child+&aqs=chrome.3.69i57j0l2j69i59.4169j0j4&client=tablet-android-samsung&sourceid=chrome-mobile&ie=UTF-8&gws_rd=cr&ei=v5AfVu3qF4m0a829i9AM,](https://www.google.co.uk/search?q=child+incestuous+abuse&oq=child+&aqs=chrome.3.69i57j0l2j69i59.4169j0j4&client=tablet-android-samsung&sourceid=chrome-mobile&ie=UTF-8&gws_rd=cr&ei=v5AfVu3qF4m0a829i9AM)

(7) https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Avunculate_marriage

Clive Gamble's piece quite caught my attention even though I did not contribute during question time, already instructing myself to reference his work further after the conference. I must admit that I have a strong penchant for the primatologist Richard Wrangham, whom he mentioned a few times during his discourse and whom I find an utter realist after reading his book *Sexual Coercion in Primate and Humans*. (8) Clive had not read that particular book himself, he said, and after thanking him on what he'd put forward on the evolution of the male control of resources, I mentioned that I'd been using for some time a term I'd coined, male physical strength power sharing, which he said was accurate enough. It's a subject I am very interested in, especially because I believe that the human species has literally become a totally different life form ever since women got the right to vote. Before, when males totally controlled resources, rape and pillage was ubiquitously a mode for reproduction and resource acquisition (7). Ever since women got the same right to vote and to make complete autonomous decisions about their lives, we have evolved to be a psychologically distinguishable organism. I'd mentioned that latter to Milford Wolpoff on the second day of the conference, who corrected me on my saying that we had evolved to being a different species, taking the standard definition of the word into account. Having thanked him then, replying that I'd made note of his better word power (he is after all a world renowned paleoanthropologist) and not pressing him, I mulled about the issue later. I could only agree with Milford, resolved to refer to post- women getting the vote as a different life form, informed him in gratitude of my decision the next day and haven't looked back. That would better give expression to situations where unwanted pregnancies occur against the will of women that have been raped. After the conference I was left with an afterthought, that if rape and pillage has indeed been a mode of reproduction for our species and possibly their archaic descendants, could that be traced relative to the Y chromosome and Mtdna constituting populations? If the directionality of population gene flow was through

male conquest and usurpation of territories, taking into account the females living in those areas, that might be reflected in the Y chromosome make up of the males relative to the Mtdna lineages surviving. Can we technologically obtain precise genetic profiles which can differentiate whether Y chromosomes temporally match some particular Mtdna in geographical provenance or not? If exogamy through the forceful acquisition of females were part and parcel of being Homo, would that temporal matching only be constant in being necessarily male forwardly directed in evolving populations, so any geographical provenance determined would also be male forwardly directed outbreeding? In terms of gene flow of evolving populations, that would make the female population as a settled non migratory influence relative to the impetus of male exogamous acquisition through migratory warfare. If such a thing were discernable by genetic analysis it would prove that Homo has always been, prior women getting the vote, an aggressive lifeform and multiplied in numbers like so.

(8) The Dark Side Of Man (Helix Books) – April 4, 2000, an eye opener by Michael Ghiglieri <http://www.amazon.com/The-Dark-Side-Helix-Books/dp/0738203157>

John Hawks gave the closing lecture and having looked up the title of it on the conference program, I prepared the following question beforehand as he talked. "I keep feeling a great conflict between saying that neanderthals went extinct and that most people on this world today carry in them to some extent neanderthal genes. In terms of comparison in numbers with people with no neanderthal genes, were neanderthals the more successful in producing offspring?" John said he liked answering that sort of question and that he did not know what the ratio of neanderthals that had ever existed was, when compared to anybody introgressively carrying neanderthal genes, in the past or at present. Because of the known African populations that do not have discernable neanderthal genes, as I'd written that question down, I'd had a very, very rough look during the lecture at the present day population numbers of Africa compared to the rest of the world. Without discounting those without slightly discernable neanderthal genes, and the population numbers of the rest of the world, that's roughly about 1.1 billion Africans to 6.2 billion rest of the world. Pure blood neanderthals weren't populous when they existed, throughout their whole approximate population life span, nor at any one moment during that time (9). So at least when summing up the contemporary human global population comparing people carrying Neanderthal Dna with those than do not, people who are genetically discernable as being partially the offspring of neanderthal ancestors by far outnumber those who are not. It's a quite neanderthal world out there in terms of an inclusive majority.

(9) <http://news.nationalgeographic.com/news/2014/04/140421-neanderthal-dna-genes-human-ancestry-science/>

A theme that seemed to repeat itself throughout the conference was the need for increasing the number of archaeological digs. Erik Trinkhaus said that we could only gauge more accurate conclusions from the maximum available fossil samples, echoing Chris Stringer when he answered my question in the opening lecture on moderns' introgression into neanderthals. Consulting with John Hawks at another coffee break on the common prevalence of australopithecus/hominid finds in subterranean sites, be they incidental, or related to usage, I queried him on the existence of present day technology so as find more sites with. I reasoned that if someone can be trained to look for fossils on the ground surface they could also be trained to look for the surface signs of subterranean fossil sites aided by the latest upgraded ground and underground mapping technology. John clarified the situation informing me that such mapping technology has existed for some time and potential fossil yielding sites are already located, but financing was the only impasse to searching at new sites. At the Calpe conference 2001 years back I fondly remembered Chris nodding and agreeing over a pint of lager to me telling him that the study of anthropology was beneficial to the psychology of this world's inhabitants because of all human backwardness there is, is expressed as primate based violence. With the same stance but with only video snippets of the violence of chimpanzees to guide me then, I had no idea how much I was going to further evolve this mindset, reinforced later on by the writings of Richard Wrangham with his *Sexual Coercion Of Primates And Humans*, Anna Motz with her *The Psychology of Female Violence*, and Michael Ghisler's *The Dark Side Of Man*. The fact is that the self predatory but still gregarious human primate species is very violent and, until the last metaphorical second of the eleventh hour, has only been socially cohesive due to male physical strength power sharing which necessarily means using aggression for social order and status. Whereas before a tribe of hunter gatherers after an attack could get away with the booty and females of another tribe without greatly affecting an ecology, today whole ecosystems can be laid to waste with technologies that devastate unintentionally, or intentionally applying a scorched Earth policy. The realisation that our home planet Earth has a finite surface area bears with it the responsibility of proper management and, despite the usual prophecy of global annihilation by some token scientist, human extinction would certainly loom only if we tried to do nothing about it. In these circumstances it is the responsibility of any educational system to inform people of the facts because without facts to guide us we are nothing but aggressive primates ruled by natural egotism. Psychological sublimation, that is the modifying of behaviour to that of one that is socially acceptable, can only be effected with the masses if there are facts to relate to. The aggressive primate in humans, without knowing facts essentially lives a lie, egotistically expressed in bluff as a means to survive until the restless younger grow up to dare usurp them, breeding reckless organised anarchy in the process. Therefore it is imperative that all education be evolutionary based because without understanding what we evolved from, we would not be able to perceive and find solutions to everything that is unjustly wrong with the world. Ancestor observance is intrinsic to the human phenomenon even in this modern day and age. If we teach

the masses factual anthropological information about their evolutionary ancestors we are not only respecting their traditions on ancestry, but agreeing that it is logical thing for them to have practiced. Any culture that is still incompatibly mired in the non acceptance of the anthropologically verifiable ancestral evidence available, is unfortunately still expressing itself, within itself, and externally to evolutionists, in terms of aggressive primates. All governments ought to prioritize financing human fossil finding to obtain the knowledge we need to reach reasoned peace of mind as a species. To know ourselves is to have the ability to change our behaviour.

Another recurring theme was the discussion of what exactly defines the modern human species, interlinked with the purported incompatibility between multiregional and recent african origins hypotheses. Erik Trinkaus had during his lecture repeated several times that we tend to overemphasize the anatomical dissimilarity between neanderthals and moderns, pointing out the cases he found there was evidence to back his argumentation. Christophs prior lecture in which he said that species were no certain fixed entity had added weight to this these thoughts. After reading Milford's and Rachel Caspari's paper, *The Origin Of Modern Humans* and noticing that he did not deny population movements stemming from Africa, I asked him during another break that if he thought, as I already did from reading his paper that multiregional theory incorporated out of Africa theory. He immediately answered yes. Also, when I'd asked during one of the discussion sessions whether from a multiregional view did human anatomical and technological evolution evolve to a point that rendered allopatric speciation impossible, Milford was the only one who answered. He initially said that the answer to that question was worth a lot of money and when I pressed him for a more definite answer he just said " I don't know". As an afterthought, if human anatomical and technological evolution did make allopatric speciation impossible, from my limited knowledge of anthropology, I would hazard to guess, that might have occurred ever since *H heidelbergensis*, because of their comparable cranial volume to humans and their population spread. I'd also asked Milford during a coffee break, another idea I'd had reading the paper *The Origin Of Modern Humans*, which was if relative to the out of africa hypothesis, from the results obtained that indicated a bottleneck population because of Mtdna mutation rates, whether that could be adaptive genes instead? He said possibly yes, think of the advantages. As soon as he started explaining the role of Mtdna as fuel cells in energy production (I already knew what Mtdna did but had not made the connection) and how would a beneficial mutation in that direction affect a population, my mind hit a jackpot as I suddenly realised the importance of his answer. Also, whilst writing this summary and doing a bit of quick research I found several articles on mtdna and its theorised interrelationship with longevity (10). Would a mutation in mtdna augmenting longevity or energy production, related to the out of africa population movements, have a discernable signature in the mtdna of the human species today? Is there any other way such a hypothesis could be proved or disproved?

(10)

<https://www.google.com/search?q=mtdna+and+lifespan&oq=mtdna+and+lifespan&aqs=chrome..69i57j0l3.14373j0j4&client=tablet-android-samsung&sourceid=chrome-mobile&ie=UTF-8>

On the last day when John Hawks had given his closing lecture, he passed around a reconstruction of the skull of recently discovered Homo naledi. I'd been lucky to see a documentary of the discovery of Homo naledi a week before the conference which had just aired in USA in which John had appeared. The evolutionary metaphor of *the braided stream* was introduced to the public to bring them up to date with human evolution during that documentary, with what we now know from evidential finds. We were told to compare human evolution to a braided stream that kept dividing and joining up again. Because it was not mentioned during the documentary, I personally asked John Hawks between lectures whether he thought that, as I did, *the braided stream* was appropriately synonymous with the multiregional hypothesis and he said yes, as a metaphor. Just to check whether anyone else had thought of the braided stream (11) as multiregional theory I did a Google Search for, "the braided stream is multiregional evolution," and the first result that luckily came out was a nicely detailed article (12) written by Chris Stringer entitled "Why we are not all multiregionalists now." In it he argues that, "models and data still validates a recent African origin model for modern humans," and quotes John Hawks as saying, relative to switching from phylogenetic trees to braids, "I admit that the braided stream is not a perfect analogy. Diverging rivulets within a valley almost always come together again, forming a complicated network as they form sandbars and islets. None of them flow into a cul-de-sac." Compared to what John answered to me as to the braided stream being an appropriate metaphor, I guess that he meant that *literally* it did not describe human evolutionary pathways accurately enough. Luckily again, on the same day listening to the BBC World Service radio, an announcement (13) was made as to "scientists working in Daoxian, south China, had discovered teeth belonging to modern humans that date to at least 80,000 years ago. This is 20,000 years earlier than the widely accepted "Out of Africa" migration that led to the successful peopling of the globe by our species." In the article Chris Stinger validated the dating methods and "said the new study was "a game-changer" in the debate about the spread of modern humans."

(11) Clive Finlayson <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/science-environment-25559172#>

(12) <http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0169534714000470>

(13) <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/science-environment-34531861>

With all the new fossil finds cropping out, backed by genetic evidence, everybody in anthropological circles seems to have no option but to have to adopt multiregional

theory to a greater or lesser extent, or face reputable extinction. The general disagreement of what makes Homo a human, modern or archaic, was not settled at the conference but at least definitions were being actively sought or rejected. I personally am quite happy in describing say, neanderthals in the binomial nomenclature that is normally reserved for species and not interbreeding populations. On the other hand, we still ought give reference to documented evolved differences because they are facts that are verifiable. If a subspecies is a differentiated population of more than one populations of a species that are capable of interbreeding and producing fertile offspring, but they do not interbreed in nature due to geographic isolation or other factors, then all the different populations of Homo that have interbred or have been capable of are just subspecies. If the problem in categorising subspecies of Homo is to elucidate that what are normally presented as species are not, then the problem lies in the naming system. If consensus were given to labelling monotypic tendencies within the subspecies of a polytypic species then the taxonomical classification of Homo that is presently in use will stand the test of time, but a formal agreement would have to be reached. The problem lies in classifying the variation in our genus, because of the fast rate of evolution achieved ever since we split from chimpanzee like hominoids and so much attention that by necessity has to be given to variety of fossils found that encompass such a short period of time.



All the delegates at the start of the conference



All faces visible are those of hominids. At the end of the conference John Hawks and his very well performed exit out of the Gibraltar University with the reconstruction of the Homo naledi skull in his left hand I'm improvising walking backwards looking forwards, taking as many photographs as I can to later on select the one that comes out best. On my following the group's passage from infront, with John purposefully holding the Homo naledi skull face front, John jokingly told everyone that I, the beholder, am "the paparazzi." That's exactly how I felt. In fact I have a penchant for taking photographs of local newspaper photographers taking photos at event. Gibraltar being a small place, I know a number of them.



Multiregional incorporates out of Africa, both work together.



Milford and Rachel chilling out



Selfie with a reconstruction of Homo naledi