

NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC

and the

STONE AGE SWINDLE

by **IAN TAYLOR**

author of "In the Minds of Men"

The latest in a series of swindles concerning the evolution of man has recently been exposed by the European press. This article reports details not likely to be announced in the popular press and shows that the pattern for this type of deception has been consistent over this past century.

The adventure began in 1971 when a hunter named Dafal reported the discovery of a Stone Age tribe of men, women and children living in the thick rain-forest of Mindanao, an island of the Philippines in south-east Asia. Dafal had informed Manuel Elizalde, the Presidential assistant on National Minorities under the then Marcos government. "Manda" Elizalde had in turn contacted National Geographic magazine in Washington with an offer of exclusive rights to the story of the century where a deputation from this age would meet with men still living in the Stone Age.

The prospects were considered significant enough to engage the attention of NBC television, by which the event could be brought to the US television audience rather than confined to the National Geographic readership. For his part in the deal, Elizalde was assured of a prominent place in this historic venture, and he confidently expected that the kudos would raise him above a rather minor governmental post. In any case, there was the \$50,000 that NBC had paid him for exclusive rights.

So it was that in December, 1971, the North American television audience was treated to a unique jungle meeting between the Presidential assistant and some naked dwellers of the Stone Age. The National Geographic special, "The Last Tribes of Mindanao," will have been fixed in the memories of millions of viewers. However, the story needed a follow-up, because up to this point the meeting had simply been in the jungle, and no one actually knew where or how these Tasaday people lived.

It was left to Dafal to gain the confidence of the tribe chief named Balayem, who eventually took his new-found friend to the tribe's cave deep in the jungle. But

the tricky question was, "How do you get the National Geographic and NBC team to the cave?" The thick jungle and uneven terrain made it totally impossible to cut a landing strip for a plane, or even a helicopter. Besides, as Elizalde explained, the entire territory must be protected against loggers who would come and exploit the forest once there was a foothold.

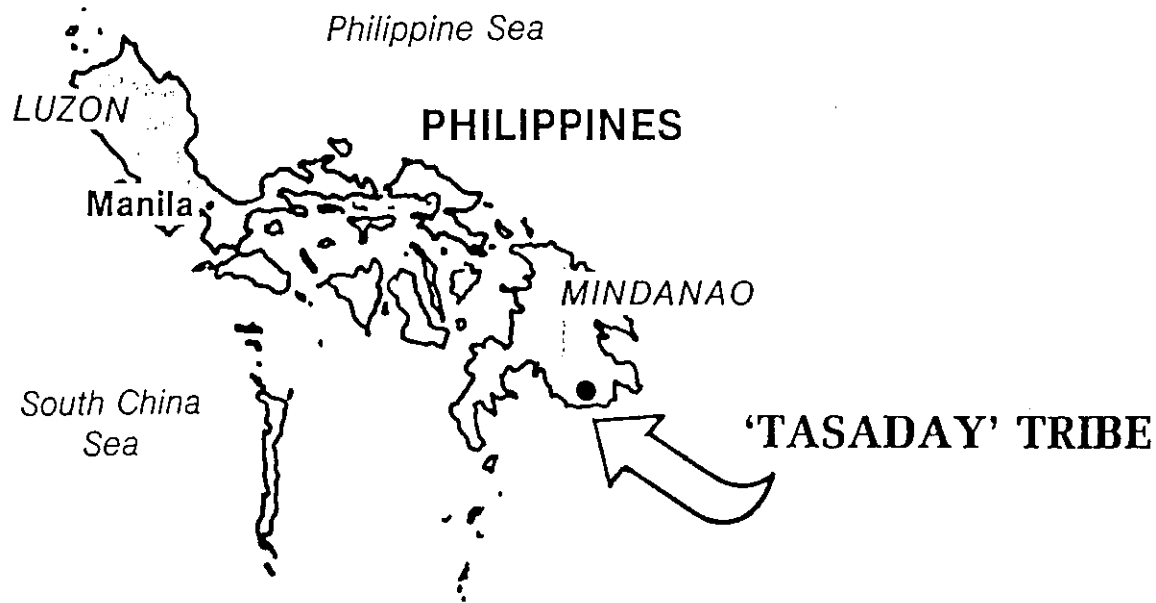
It was decided to send in a small party headed by Dafal, who would build a temporary landing pad for the reporters on top of a tall tree near the Tasadays' cave. Very soon a stick and rattan platform was precariously lashed to the top of a truncated tree. Seventy-five feet below lay the jungle floor, so steeply sloped that it was only just able to support mature trees.

The Alouette 3 helicopter hovered while its passengers climbed down on to the platform, and on down the tree. This was the strange doorway in time by which the adventurers made their exit from the Space Age, and passed into the Stone Age to meet those whom "evolution" had supposedly left behind. They were met by Balayem, who led them to the cave. Here they spent two days filming life in the Stone Age.

The Tasaday people, naked except for a slim genital pouch for the men and a grass skirt for the women, lived off the jungle. They knew nothing of agriculture. They had stone axes like the oldest tools of the European Palaeolithic and they had learned to use the fire drill, a device from pre-history. By whirling a wooden rod back and forth between a man's palms, a spark could be nursed into flame with dried threads of vegetable fibre.

PROPHECY

Working through two interpreters, fragments of information emerged. There were 24 in the tribe; they all had names; half the men had wives, but there were not enough women for the others; they did not share wives. They had lived in the cave for as long as they could remember and their ancestors had lived there before them. Strangely, they remembered a prophecy



from their ancestors which told of an outsider who would come and love and protect them, and lead them out of darkness. That saviour was recognised in the person of "Manda" Elizalde.

Although there were no professional anthropologists on the team of reporters, it was agreed by all that quite contrary to some scholars' beliefs, these Tasaday people were not innately murderous as our hominid ancestors supposedly were. They were gentle and affectionate. However, apart from this one fact, every other expectation of what Stone Age man was like seemed to have been wonderfully fulfilled. Clearly, the tribe needed to be protected if they were to learn to deal with a dominant Westernised Christian culture. Accordingly, President Marcos himself later declared the entire territory a reservation, off-limits to outsiders.

The story was duly reported in the August 1972 issue of the National Geographic magazine (142:218) and gave spectacular visual reinforcement of the textbook descriptions of the Stone Age, all in glorious Kodachrome. Darwin's ascent of man had once more been confirmed, and not a word more was heard of the Tasaday people - until April 1986.

At the fall of the Marcos government early in 1986, the truth about the Stone Age tribe began to leak out. A Swiss journalist, Oswald Iten, investigated the affair and reported it in the Swiss newspaper *Neue Zuercher Zeitung* (84:77). The three-page story appeared in the weekend issue of April 12-13 under the banner headline "Steinzeitschwindel" - or "Stone-Age Swindle". It was indeed a swindle. Both National Geographic and the NBC television network had been taken in hook, line and sinker by the "gentle Tasadays".

It turned out that the masterminds were Elizalde, whose motive was self-aggrandisement, and Dafal the "hunter", who saw an opportunity to make some easy money. Dafal and the other *Manubo Blit* people - Tasaday was an invented name - lived in the village on the other side of the hill from the cave. They were

slash-and-burn farmers who lived a free and easy life, with a little hunting, more for fun than for necessity. Of course, they wore clothes like anyone else, and Oswald Iten's newspaper photos show some of the wives wearing rather trendy Levi shirts.

The caper had involved just two or three families who were persuaded, at first somewhat reluctantly, to remove their clothes and act like Stone Age people - living in the cave for a couple of days for the benefit of the American visitors. It had been necessary to rehearse with stone axes and the fire drill a little beforehand, and the most difficult part was to adopt the vacant stare of the Stone-Ager, "as human intelligence was just beginning to emerge"! As the National Geographic photos show, they managed this part of the act quite skilfully. The business with the helicopter and landing platform was ingenious, and allowed the visitors to be taken to the cave without becoming aware of the pathways and village on the other side of the hill. Of course, the interpreters were in on the swindle, while the 'prophecy' was felt to be a nice touch giving the affair an attractive sense of mystery.

With their extraordinary efficiency, Reuters wire service carried the news of the hoax to every major newspaper on April 13, the day the story broke in the Swiss newspaper. The following day was a 'no news' day, but on April 15 the US bombing of Libya occupied the news media's attention. As far as this author has been able to determine, no North American newspaper picked up this juicy news scoop on April 14 or since, with the result that the public has been left with the lie.*

CONFESSION?

Certainly, it must be an embarrassing moment for National Geographic, and one would hope that they would make a full confession to their readers - but that expectation has a pious ring to it. The European news media, perhaps less concerned with National Geographic's sensibilities, have somewhat gleefully carried the story.

Just how is it that National Geographic, having highly qualified - perhaps over-qualified - editors and some of the world's best photographers, were taken in by this hoax? The answer, in a word, is preconception. National Geographic is so totally committed to the theory of evolution, and the evolution of man particularly, that the Tasaday story, which appeared to support the theory, was picked up and reported uncritically.

It may well be that Elizalde was fully aware of this gullibility and turned it to his advantage. After all, the European and Japanese press are equally willing to pay well for the rights to a good story, but the Germans are too thorough and the Japanese do not have as deep a commitment to evolution as the Americans. It was the Japanese who fully reported the spectacular catch of a recently living plesiosaur, supposedly extinct for 100 million years, in April 1977. The Western press, including National Geographic, had all the details but did not report this damaging

counter-evidence for evolution to the public. To the Japanese, however, 1977 marked 100 years of Japanese scientific discovery. So convinced were they by the evidence they had, they chose the plesiosaur as discovery of the year, and even used it as their national celebration emblem, issuing a special postage stamp featuring the creature.

The Tasaday affair is not the first occasion that the West has been taken in by the East. The Margaret Mead story is a classic case of a young researcher with a preconceived idea who went out to look for evidence. Of course, she found it. Her preconception was that the Judeo-Christian ethic imposed upon adolescents' discovery of sexuality conflicted with a natural biological necessity. Going to a culture essentially free from the Judeo-Christian influence, she questioned a small number of adolescent girls of Samoa who quickly caught on to what the American visitor wanted to hear.



The carcass of a recently living creature, caught by Japanese fishermen off the coast of New Zealand in 1977. Most Japanese scientists believed it was a plesiosaur, thought extinct by evolutionists for 100 million years.



Japan celebrated 100 years of scientific discovery in 1977 by issuing a special postage stamp featuring a plesiosaur.

They told the 23-year-old Mead the most far-fetched stories of a happy society with "free-love under the palm trees." None of it was true. The "research" was an instant success among those who wanted scientific licence for immorality, and the moral standards of North American life have steadily declined since. Mead published her work in 1926. The truth was only disclosed some 50 years later, but by this time it was too late - premarital sex is the norm, trial marriages are commonplace, and divorce is rampant.

Anthropology, and specifically the study of man's origins, is an exercise in finding evidence to support a preconceived idea, but on every occasion there is a consistent pattern of deception. The "evidence", such as the Tasaday people, or Mead's findings in Samoa, are brought forth to the public with great fanfare. Years later the truth leaks out. The "evidence" is shown to have been a misinterpretation or even an outright hoax, but very rarely does this become news and the public is left with the lie. When examined closely, the entire evolutionary edifice is built upon this type of imaginary evidence which has been forcefully planted in the public mind.

A few examples other than the well-known Neanderthal, Piltdown, and Nebraska frauds will further illustrate the point.

KRAO FARINI: THE MISSING LINK

This is one of the forgotten pieces of "evidence" today, but the pattern of deception conformed precisely to those already described. This curious case was of a rare condition consisting of an abnormal development of hair over the whole body of a young female. The girl, Krao Farini, was born in Burma. At about six years of age she was exhibited at the Royal aquarium, London, in 1882. Newspapers gave the opinion that this was a case of atavism, or reversion to a low ape-like ancestor. The popular *Scientific American* for 1883 (48:247) promoted this view by quoting from a German correspondent, but the widely circulated *English Mechanic* - reporting later in 1894 (60:429) - was more forthright, and titled their article 'Krao Farini: The Missing Link.'

The general public had little choice but to believe that some kind of living 'missing link' had been discovered in the jungles of Burma. The truth of the matter was reported in the more obscure pages of the *British Medical Journal* for 1883 (1:28), where it was pointed out that it was simply a rare case of *hypertrichosis universalis*. Far from having lived a wild life in the jungles, Krao's mother was actually employed at the court of the King of Laos, while Krao herself was a very intelligent child who became fluent in English, French and German.

CHILDREN BORN WITH A 'TAIL'

This is a favourite piece of "evidence" which seems to be trotted out in the popular press every decade or so. The most recent was reported in the North American newspapers as "Child born with a tail" in May 1982, but the facts were more soberly reported in the *New England Journal of Medicine* (306:1212). Even though the medical profession is careful to point out that the phenomenon is not a tail and contains no bones, but is rather fatty tissue known as a caudal appendage, the popular press still prefers to leave the impression that an evolutionary throw-back has occurred.

These few examples relate to the origin of man, but there are many from other fields in which the popular press has uncritically accepted the word of the scientist and deceived the public. It should be quickly added that not all scientists are deceived. Usually only a handful are - those with a particular commitment to a preconceived notion. These are deceived first before they deceive others, which is a far more effective way of convincing others than by deliberate deception. Although each case of deception may be dismissed as inconsequential, the discerning mind will see that the cumulative effect has been highly significant. On each occasion the lie has been left in the public consciousness as long as possible, so that each will overlap and reinforce the next.

The overall effect - dare we say motive? - has been to support and confirm Darwin's ascent of man from brutal beginnings. Without having to openly say so, the consequences of being led to believe this notion are to deny the biblical account of man's Fall from noble beginnings. Darwin and the Bible cannot both be true. Many professing to be Christians have uncritically accepted from television and popular magazines the lies upon which Darwin's ascent of man is supported.

It is hoped that the work of Creation Science groups will help them to see that by denying the biblical Fall of man, they deny the need for Redemption and the work of the Redeemer. May we be reminded of the words of Jesus, "*But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven.*" (MATT 10:33).

* Since this article was written, the US television program '60 Minutes' broadcast a 20-minute exposure of the entire swindle (about mid-August 1986). Some newspapers may now have picked up the story.

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CHRISTIAN ASSEMBLIES INTERNATIONAL, P.O. BOX 888, COFFS HARBOUR N.S.W. 2450, AUSTRALIA