

By Bradley T. Lepper

[*The Hidden History of the Human Race*](#) by Michael A. Cremo and Richard L. Thompson, is an ideologically motivated assault on the conventional view of human evolution and prehistory. The authors claim "various humanlike and apelike beings have coexisted for long periods of time" (hundreds of millions of years, in fact) and that scientists have "systematically suppressed" the evidence for this incredible notion (p. xvii, 133).

The Hidden History of the Human Race is an abridged edition of *Forbidden Archaeology*, published by the Bhaktivedanta Institute in San Diego, and dedicated to "His Divine Grace, A. C. Ghaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada," the implications of which will be apparent below. In the preface to the abridgement Michael Cremo states the rationale for this leaner version: it's "shorter, more readable, and more affordable." In other words, they hope to reach a wider audience with their message that human evolution didn't happen the way the textbooks claim, and that generations of archaeologists and paleoanthropologists have conspired to conceal the truth from the public.

The original book has been reviewed in various places (Feder, 1994; Marks, 1994; Tarzia, 1994) and, as the substance of the work has not changed, the interested reader might want to consult these other reviews for different, if concordant, perspectives. It is worthwhile to consider the new abridgement because it is likely to be more widely read than its rather ponderous predecessor (in fact, it can be found in many mainstream bookstore chains, including Barnes and Noble).

The Hidden History of the Human Race is a frustrating book. The motivation of the authors, "members of the Bhaktivedanta Institute, a branch of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness" (p. xix), is to find support in the data of paleoanthropology and archaeology for the Vedic scriptures of India. Their methods are borrowed from fundamentalist Christian creationists (whom they assiduously avoid citing). They catalog odd "facts" which appear to conflict with the modern scientific understanding of human evolution and they take statements from the work of conventional scholars and cite them out of context to support some bizarre assertion which the original author would almost certainly not have advocated. Cremo and Thompson regard their collection of dubious facts as "anomalies" that the current paradigm of paleoanthropology cannot explain. Sadly, they offer no alternative paradigm which might accommodate both the existing data and the so-called anomalies they present; although they do indicate that a second volume is planned which will relate their "extensive research results" to their "Vedic source material" (p. xix). Kuhn noted that "To reject one paradigm without simultaneously substituting another is to reject science itself" (1970, p. 79); and that is precisely what Cremo and Thompson do. They claim that "mechanistic science" is a "militant ideology, skillfully promoted by the combined effort of scientists, educators, and wealthy industrialists, with a view towards establishing worldwide intellectual dominance" (p. 196).

The work is frustrating because it mixes together a genuine contribution to our understanding of the history of archaeology and paleoanthropology with a bewildering mass of absurd claims and an audaciously distorted review of the current state of paleoanthropology.

Cremo and Thompson are quite right about the extreme conservatism of many archaeologists and physical anthropologists. While an undergraduate at a prominent southwestern university, I participated in classroom discussions about the claims for a very early occupation at the Timlin site (in New York) which had just been announced. The professor surprised me when she stated flatly that, if the dates were correct, then it was "obviously not a site." This dismissal of the possibility of such an ancient site, without an examination of the data or even a careful reading of the published claim, is dogmatism of the sort rightfully decried by Cremo and Thompson. George Carter, the late Thomas Lee, and Virginia Steene-McIntyre are among those whose claims for very early humans in America have been met with unfortunate ad hominem attacks by some conservative archaeologists; but, regardless of how shamefully these scholars were treated, the fact remains that their claims have not been supported by sufficiently compelling evidence. Cremo and Thompson are wrong, however, when they condemn scientists for demanding "higher levels of proof for anomalous finds than for evidence that fits within the established ideas about human evolution" (p. 49). It is axiomatic that extraordinary claims demand extraordinary evidence.

Cremo and Thompson have little understanding of history and almost no understanding of the disciplines of paleoanthropology and archaeology. In the introduction, Thompson is identified as a generic "scientist" and "a mathematician," while Cremo is "a writer and editor for books and magazines published by the Bhaktivedanta Book Trust" (p. xix). Their naive approach to history is revealed in their discussion of the alleged discovery of broken columns, "coins, handles of hammers, and other tools" quarried from limestone in France between 1786 and 1788 (p. 104). In order to establish the credibility of this report they note that it was published in the *American Journal of Science* in 1820. They attempt to support their charge that modern scientists are dogmatic by observing that "today, however, it is unlikely such a report would be found in the pages of a scientific journal" (p. 104). The *American Journal of Science* in the 1820s published many reports that would not be found in modern science journals. Mermaids (Shillaber 1823), sea serpents (*American Journal of Science and Arts*, 1826), and the efficacy of divining rods for locating water (Emerson, 1821) were topics of interest to scientists of that era. That such material was presented in a 19th century journal with "Science" in the title is no measure of its reliability or its relevance to modern science; likewise, that modern marine biologists no longer consider mermaids a worthy subject for research is no measure of their dogmatism. Cremo

and Thompson might disagree, however, for they devote an entire chapter to reports of "living ape-men" such as Bigfoot, which, even if true, contribute nothing to their thesis that anatomically modern humans lived in geologically ancient times. Chimpanzees are "ape-men" of a sort, sharing 99% of our genetic makeup, and their coexistence with *Homo sapiens sapiens* does no violence to evolutionary theory.

Cremona and Thompson's ignorance of the basic data of archaeology is exemplified by their reference to the Venus of Willendorf as a work of "Neolithic" rather than Paleolithic art (p. 84) and their mistaken identification of a nondescript stone blade from Sandia Cave as a "Folsom point" (p. 93). Folsom points are highly specialized and distinctive artifacts and, although the excavators of Sandia Cave did recover several from that site, a Folsom point is not what is depicted in the photograph reproduced by Cremona and Thompson (p. 93). Moreover, although they have plumbed the depths of 19th-century literature in search of crumbs of data that support their rather vague notions about the extreme antiquity of *Homo sapiens*, they are not abreast of the latest developments in the field of archaeology. They refer to claims of great antiquity for artifacts from the Calico, Pedra Furada, Sandia Cave, Shiguandah, and Timlin sites, but are apparently unaware of recent (and some not so recent) work concerning these sites which substantially refutes (or calls into serious question) the claims of the original investigators (e.g., Cole and Godfrey, 1977; Cole et al., 1978; Funk, 1977; Haynes and Agogino, 1986; Julig et al., 1990; Kirkland, 1977; Meltzer et al., 1994; Preston, 1995; Schnurrenberger and Bryan, 1985; Starna, 1977; Taylor, 1994).

This is a book designed to titillate, not elucidate. The authors discuss a weathered rock more than 200 million years old which they identify as a fossilized partial shoe sole (p. 115-116). They allude to "microphoto magnifications" of the fossilized stitches which allegedly show "the minutest detail of thread twist and warp" (p. 116), but do not present these magnified images. Instead, they reproduce a somewhat blurred photograph of the weathered outlines which do not, at least to this reviewer, resemble any portion of a shoe sole.

Cremona and Thompson discuss the three to four million year old fossilized footprints discovered at Laetoli, and note that scholars have observed "close similarities with the anatomy of the feet of modern humans" (p. 262). Cremona and Thompson conclude that these footprints actually are the tracks of anatomically modern humans, but they offer no explanation for why these individuals were not wearing the shoes which supposedly had been invented more than 296 million years earlier.

Cremona and Thompson are selectively credulous to an astonishing degree. They accept without question the testimony of 19th-century goldminers and quarrymen, but treat with extreme skepticism (or outright derision) the observations of 20th-century archaeologists. That Von Koenigswald purchased *Pithecanthropus* fossils from native Javanese causes Cremona and Thompson "uneasiness" (p. 164); but they blithely accept Taylor's purchase of the "Foxhall Jaw" from "a workman who wanted a glass of beer" (p. 133) without similar unease. The authors are critical of archaeologists for rejecting the very early radiometric dates for technologically recent stone artifacts at Hueyatenco, Mexico (pp. 91-93), but they are as quick to reject radiometric dates which do not agree with their preconceived interpretations (pp. 125, 139-140).

Cremona and Thompson's claim that anatomically modern *Homo sapiens sapiens* have been around for hundreds of millions of years is an outrageous notion. Accepting that there is a place in science for seemingly outrageous hypotheses (cf. Davis, 1926) there is no justification for the sort of sloppy rehashing of canards, hoaxes, red herrings, half-truths and fantasies Cremona and Thompson offer in the service of a religious ideology. Readers who are interested in a more credible presentation of the overwhelming evidence for human evolution should consult Ian Tattersall's wonderful recent book *The Fossil Trail: how we know what we think we know about human evolution*.

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Hidden Agenda is a live house located in the industrial area of Kwun Tong, Hong Kong. It opened in January 2009 and has since then relocated twice due to rising rents and the violation of permitted land uses (that excludes the operation of cultural venues in industrial buildings). The current venue is about 4,000 sqf (approximately 370 sqm) and can hold up to 300 people. It is often referred to as the Hong Kong version of the legendary CBGB in New York. Hidden Agenda stages around 60 shows every year Developed by Trans Fiction Systems Inc. Released 1989 Also For Macintosh Published by Springboard Software Inc. Gameplay Managerial / Business Simulation Genre Simulation, Strategy/Tactics. Description. Hidden Agenda is a government simulation game oriented on political decisions and their consequences. The player is in the role of a newly chosen president of a fictitious Latin American country called Chimerica. From Mobygames.com. Original Entry.