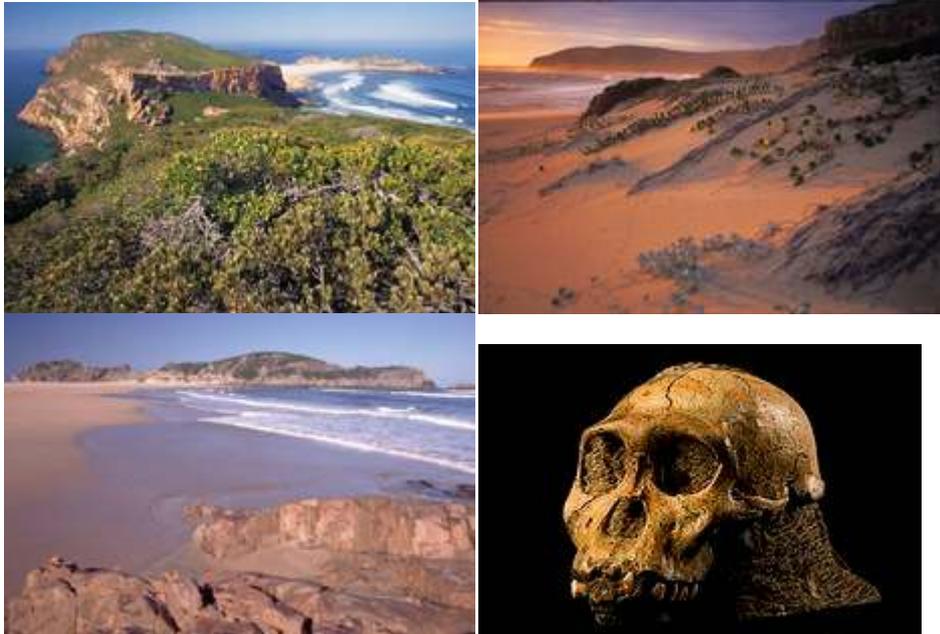


## THE SOUTHERN CAPE COASTLINE – ORIGONS OF MODERN MAN NELSON'CAVE/PINNACLE POINT/KLASIES RIVER/BLOMBOS CAVE – “ THE 2<sup>nd</sup> OUT OF AFRICA THERORY ” 150 000 YEARS BC



After debating for decades, palaeo-anthropologists now agree there is enough genetic and fossil evidence to suggest that MODERN Homo sapiens evolved in Africa ca. 200,000–160,000 years ago. At that time, the world was in an ice age, and Africa was dry and arid. Archaeological sites dating to that time period are rare in Africa, however several sites have now been located and investigated along the southern Cape coastline. These sites, as more fossil evidence is exposed and interpreted, are of huge international importance, giving us a clear understanding and time line of the origins of our specie. It is likely the collective sites will be nominated for World Heritage status through UNESCO in the next five years.

The sites at Pinnacle Point, the Robberg peninsula, (Nelson's Cave), Klasies river and Blombos cave have yielded rich archaeological material covering its intermittent Middle and Later Stone Age occupation dating from a few hundred to more than 175,000 BP. The caves was abandoned between 40,000 to 20,000 BP during the last Ice Age when the sea level here dropped some 130 metres, the coastline moving about 100 km seaward. Animals that roamed this grassland habitat at this time included giant buffalo, an equine close to the quagga, springbok and alcelaphine antelopes: blesbok/bontebok, wildebeest, hartebeest and a giant alcelaphine. Bones from all these herbivores have been recorded in the cave's middens “.

The people who lived in the Caves approximately 164,000 years ago were systematically harvesting shellfish from the coast; that they were using complex bladelet technology to produce complex tools; and that they regularly used ochre as pigments for symbolizing.

Genetic studies and fossil evidence show that archaic Homo sapiens evolved to anatomically modern humans solely in Africa between 200 000 and 150 000 years ago, that members of one branch of Homo sapiens left Africa between 125 000 and 60 000 years ago,

and that over time these humans replaced earlier human populations such as the Neanderthals, who were resident in Asia and Europe

How did this happen, how did we evolve into our current state of human consciousness, where language, symbolic behaviour, the use of ochre for decorative purposes and the creation of stone tools, which created in essence the modern form of our species.

The story begins in the rugged coastline of the Southern Cape, where recent archaeological excavations at Pinnacle Point near Mossel Bay, Klasies River, Blombos Cave and Nelson's Cave on the Robberg peninsula, have established that modern man originated solely from this region and from a small population of around 400 -700 individuals, who survived an ice-age in the mild temperate climate of this coastline, existing primarily on shell fish. They lived in a true Garden of Eden and abundance, our ancestors in time and space. The timeline was between 150 000 to 200 000 years ago!

And here lies the clue to our transition from 'cave man' to the human state of human consciousness, which is unique to our species on planet earth. During the process of our evolution, the human brain reached its present size of 1500cc only quite recently, some 200 000 years ago. What could have caused this "Big Bang in Human Consciousness" or "the Great Leap Forward"

The puzzle of the "Big Bang" change involved putting together pieces, which at first look, had no connection or relation, whatsoever. The first piece of the puzzle involved discovering early human populations that demonstrated greater intelligence. These are known to be found in the East African Rift Valley and also at Blombos Cave, Klasies river, Nelson's cave and Pinnacle Point in the southern Cape. The second piece of the puzzle was the discovery that docosahexaenoic acid (DHA) is a major contributor to brain growth. The third piece of the discovery was that DHA is found almost exclusively in seafood, primarily shellfish.

It is therefore concluded by the above and also all relevant recent palaeontology studies, that modern thinking man originated from the southern Cape around 100 000 – 150 000 years ago. The "Out of Africa" theory now seems confirmed and factual and the sites located at Pinnacle Point, the Robberg peninsula, Klasies river and Blombos cave are of international importance. Due to the significance of these findings, the southern Cape sites have been nominated as a World Heritage Site through UNESCO.

Prof. Marean, who is leading the excavations at the Pinnacle Point Cave, is an associate director of the Institute of Human Origins and professor at the School of Human Evolution and Social Change at the Arizona State University, is quoted as follows:

*"Pinnacle Point is significant because it's a uniquely dense concentration of well-preserved archaeological sites which contain a record of human occupation over a period of about 170,000 years - from the time when modern human behaviour first emerged to the pre-colonial period," he said.*

Grahame Thomson

