

## Hominid survival

.On March 29th 1992, "The Long Beach Telegram" carried a story about an expedition to the Caucasus mountains between the Black and Caspian seas in search of the "Almasty" or Caucasian wildman:

*"Dr. Marie-Jeanne Koffmann, a French-Russian surgeon, mountaineer and scholar, has been on the Almasty trail for more than two decades and has collected more than 500 accounts and a plaster-cast footprint of the 'forest man of the Caucasus.'*

*"She travelled on horseback through the remote mountains between the Black and Caspian seas, talking to villagers who had seen the mysterious beast. Although sceptical at first, she became convinced that the Almasty was another in an array of species that roamed the Caucasian wilds. Retiring in France on a tiny Soviet pension, she never dreamed that one day she'd have the money to mount a full-scale scientific search.*

*"But then, she had not counted on Sylvain Pallix. Pallix, a documentary filmmaker, was fascinated by two articles Koffmann wrote for Archologia magazine. Tracking her down, he proposed finding sponsors for an expedition that he would film.*

*"The respected French paleoanthropologist Yves Coppens gave the search his blessing. Pallix raised half of the needed \$1.8million. He's confident he'll find the rest. 'For three weeks, the telephone has been ringing off the hook,'" said Pallix, whose previous works have included a documentary on a Harley-Davidson meet in South Dakota and one on Calvados moonshiners. 'People are fascinated by the Almasty.'*

*A dozen people will leave Paris in June, to be joined by a dozen of Koffmann's scientific colleagues from Moscow. They will conduct their search in the Kabardin-Balkar region of Russia, just north of Georgia. The expedition hopes to find the beast, put it to sleep, take blood and skin samples and a plaster cast of the face and then let it awake in freedom - after putting a band on it so its wanderings can be followed.*

*"Appearing like a cross between an ape and a Neanderthal, the Almasty reputedly can run up to 37 mph. It is said to be omnivorous and sometimes travels with companions and babies. The last sighting of the Almasty was by a zoologist friend of Koffmann who reported spending six minutes watching one on Aug. 25, 1991"*

Kabardino-Balkarian Republic is a small Constituent of the Russian Federation which is situated in the Caucasus, that disputed area of far eastern Europe, which marks the eastern border with Asia, and which has always been within the Russian sphere of influence from Tsarist times to the present day. An autonomous province was established for the Kabardians in 1921 and a year later this was extended to include the Balkarians. In 1936, the status of the region was upgraded to that of an ASSR. This, in turn, declared itself a Union Republic in 1991.

In spite of the territorial proximity of the Caucasian peoples, their development took place in certain isolation due to the mountainous terrain. Kabardinians ethnically belong to the group of Northern Caucasian peoples. Their Kabardino-Cherkess tongue belongs to the Iberian-Caucasian languages of the Indo-European language family. The written language is based on Cyrillic. Balkarians are related to Turkic peoples and speak a Turkic type of language. Their written language is also based on Cyrillic.

Both Kabardinians and Balkarians are mostly Muslims (Sunnites). But it seems that there is a history of tension between the two peoples and indeed the Balkirs were deported between 1945-1954 for their collaboration with the Nazis during WW2 and during this time the Kabardin only inhabited the republic.

It is a wild and beautiful country about which surprisingly little is known. 70% of the land is inaccessible mountains - the largest of which is Mount Erbrus, the highest mountain in Europe - and, if true, hominid survival has taken place anywhere in Europe it would be here.

Jeanne-Marie Koffman explored this area extensively, and during her travels met, Talib Kumyshev, 67, a Kahardian, who was a respected elder man of the village of Kamennomos. His testimony is highly revealing:

*...It was probably in 1930, or 1931, or 1932, in June or at the end of May, when our cattle left for the alpine pastures of Elbrus. I was chief of the group. We had left to inspect the herds with the veterinarian.*

*Well, rain had surprised one of my shepherds, Shaghir Zagureyev, very high up on the slopes, and he had gone to take refuge under a rocky overhang. As he approached it, he saw there were three almastys sitting under it. Shaghir was a little frightened, but as the rain was by then falling much harder, he decided to stay there anyway, though at a distance from them. They looked at one another. Then, the rain stopped and Shaghir came down to the farm. He did not say anything to anyone.*

*Very early in the morning, I was awakened by cries, a tremendous noise, and I saw that the shepherds were running to assemble their herds and were taking the cattle down the valley. "Why are they leaving?" I asked. "There are almastys under the rock, up there." . . .At that moment Shaghir declared: "It's true, there are three almastys sitting up there, I saw them yesterday evening." I was then really angry... I said to Shaghir: "You're an idiot. You were frightened by a bush."*

*"No," said Shaghir, "I saw them."  
"Well, why didn't you tell anyone?"*

*"Because the old people have warned: when you see an almasty for the first time, if you tell anyone about it you'll get a bad headache. Well, for me, it was the first time that I have seen one."  
I continued not to believe all this. They said to me: "OK, go ahead, go see for yourself."*

*We were about 10 to 15 people making a half-circle around that rock. We stayed there until dinnertime. Some went away, and others came up. Three almastys were seated under the overhang, two of medium size, and the other bigger. The one which was the biggest was in the middle. They were sitting on rocks, facing us, hunched over, with their heads down. From time to time they raised their heads slightly, and looked at us from under their brows.*

*Their heads were very ugly, not nice at all. Their faces resembled human faces, but the nose is shorter and flattened. The eyes are slanted and reddish. The cheeks are very prominent, like those of a Mongol or a Korean, but more so. The lips are thin. The lower jaw is receding, as though cut on a bias. The hair is long, like that of a woman, and tangled. The entire body is covered with shaggy hair, resembling that of the buffalo. In some places this is long (torso, chest) and in other places it is shorter (arms, legs).*

*The big one had the chest of a man. The others had the breasts of a woman, but extremely long and covered with hair. The hair was very dirty. The stink was so strong that we could not stand it. The odour was like that of wild flax, when it grows thickly. Once, the one seated on the right mumbled something. I did not see their hands clearly, as they were held between their legs. The legs are rather short and bowed. The foot is like that of a man, but more spread out. All were wearing, wrapped around their waists, an old piece of a shepherd's cape. A young shepherd proposed to throw a lasso around one of them and bring it into the village. But all the others cried out that it is forbidden, that they must not be harmed, and that they must not be disturbed. I watched them from a distance of three or four metres, and I even approached to within about one metre. Did I touch them? I should say not! If you touch them, as Allah is my witness, you could no longer eat with your hands afterward, they are so dirty, stinking and repulsive. I remained 1.5 - 2 hours. When I left, other shepherds were arriving. I have heard my father recount that they suckle on cows."*

There are other reports from elsewhere in the world that appear to deal with very similar creatures. An anonymous article in *The English Mechanic*, 60:429,(1894.), reads:

*"At the museum opened at St. Petersburg by Mr. Schultze, a number of remarkable things are to be seen. Krao Farini is among them, the girl who has been nicknamed the "Missing Link," and she belongs to the*

*hairy tribes inhabiting the wild country of Laos, in the northern part of Siam. She is perfectly formed, and although she is not a beauty, her appearance is by no means repulsive.*

*Her whole body is covered with a thick growth of dark hair. The growth on her cheeks, lips, and chin reminds one of a beard and whiskers; and the nose is also covered with a light down. Still more wonderful to say, she has cheek-pouches, where, like the monkeys, she can stow away tit-bits for future munching, and, like our prototypes, she possesses limbs of singular pliancy. But the most remarkable thing about the freak of Nature is the great wealth of hair on her head. It grows in thick, glistening masses, which fall below the knees. Krao was seen in England some years since, where she very quickly adapted herself to the ways ways of civilization. She can now speak three languages with fluency--English, French, and German. While Krao was on a visit to Berlin, one of the enterprising Germans proposed to her, but this offer of marriage was not accepted; Krao learned too much independence during her wild life in the woods. Even the celebrated Virchow declared, when he saw Krao, that she was a very extraordinary phenomenon which deserved the fullest attention.*

It is interesting that Krao reportedly came from Indo China because it is there that we must go next on our search for our long lost hominid cousins!

The Nguoi Rung, meaning “Forest people”, also known as the Vietnamese Wildman is another compelling contender for a surviving hominid. The descriptions are of a creature approximately six feet tall, almost completely covered with hair except for the knees, the soles of the feet, the hands and the face. The hair ranges in colour from gray to brown to black. The creature walks bipedally and is seen both solitary and with others of its species. Another name for the creature, from the Laotian border, is a local term; Khi-Trau, meaning “buffalo monkey” or “big monkey”.

The regions of the Nguoi Rung’s apparent habitation are regions where there is little or no human life at all. However the habitat is apparently shrinking, due to bombing during the Vietnam war and following a major deforestation, the Nguoi Rung are running out of places to live. Since the war, sightings are down, almost to nothing, showing either a marked population of the ape-men was killed during the war, or they were driven to higher mountainous regions where they could hide, without much intervention from any human population.

The area known as the “Three borders”, where Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos meet, is said to be the centre of Nguoi Rung activity. Reports were so abundant that during the year 1974, during the peak time of the war, General Hoang Minh Thao, the commander of the Northern Forces, requested a scientific survey north of the Kontum region, to attempt to validate the existence of the Nguoi Rung. No Nguoi Rung was actually found, but the story did not either end, or begin there. Sometime during the 1950’s a villager from the Central Highlands went into the forest and vanished without a trace. Three years passed, and the other villagers resigned to the belief that he had become lost and died in the wilderness. However, one day he returned to the village, his hair had grown long and he was completely nude, and he told them what had happened to him and where he’d been. When he went into the forest to gather rattan rope he was taken prisoner by animals looking like apes, the animals were bigger than apes, and had extremely long hair, and looked somewhat human in proportion. He was forced to live with one of the female “apes” in a cave deep in the forest. During the day this female ape kept him in the cave by putting a large stone in front of the entrance. Then she went out to gather food or fish or other edible items. After more than one growing season, he and the female ape had a female baby, a crossbreed. He didn’t explain how the interbreeding came about, or if it had been forced on him or was consensual. Eventually the creatures became comfortable with his presence, and loosened their watch on him, one day he took advantage of their negligence and escaped from the cave, and found his way back to the village.

After telling his story to the villagers, the people in the mountain village often heard long, mournful cries coming from the forest. With the permission of the elders of the village, some of the villagers followed the traces of the man who had returned to the village, back to the cave to where he had lived with the female ape. When they arrived they found a horrible sight. The entrance to the cave was destroyed and upon

entering the cave, they found the baby's body which had been torn apart. The female creature, or any more like it, however, was nowhere to be found.

This story smacks very much of a piece of folklore - mirroring as it does, so many fairy stories and fables from across the world. If, however, it is true, it suggests that the Vietnamese wildmen are men rather than animals because of their genetic compatibility with men of our own species.

Ngo Hoang, who during 1950-1952, was an armed agent of the Ministry of Propaganda in the hostile back country of Dac Lac and later was a member of an MIA in the years 1988-1991.

As a result he was well acquainted with all the forest areas of Tay Nguyen. He relates the following story: *"We were able to discover these forest men in about 1950 in an area in the vicinity of the Chu Bia mountain chain (which now belongs to the district of Dak Nong - Dak Lak). The footprint this forest man leaves behind is one and one half times as big as that of a normal man (length: about 30 cm, breadth about 20 cm). The big toe is slightly separated from the others. In the middle of the sole of the foot are many folds. After that, some of my comrades of a Pioneer unit saw a big 'man' entirely covered with gray hair. They thought it was an orang utan and wanted to kill him. Fortunately, at that time we had strict orders not to shoot. That is why this man could escape. My comrades told me that he ran very fast, as fast as only a forest creature can run, but no man can run..."*

In 1967, at Cam Ranh Bay, a US Army guard detected movement on the perimeter of the camp, the guard fired and whatever had been moving fled the area. When morning came, the area was searched...A footprint and a trail of blood were found. The print looked neither human or ape, a picture was made of the print but no one could decide what to make of the track. The animal was dubbed Powell's ape, after Captain Powell, the depot company commander.

A man named Recom Hiun, who according to our sources is still living in the mountain village of Ky, told of another event. *"The story happened in the mountain village of Ae Thi, M'Drak district (Dak Lak province), probably in the year 1971. One day, Ai Thi tribes people went as usual into the forest to far away streams to fish. They went in a southerly direction to a mountain chain of Cu Yang Sinh, which extends between Dac Lac and Khanh Hoa to the area of Nam Cat Tien and where there is the source of the spring of the Ba River (Phu Yen Province). Over a certain stretch of time the Ae Thi could not understand why their traps remained without fish. Then they discovered a strange footprint one and a half times as big as a normal human footprint. They decided to make an ambush so as to capture this creature there and then. Some days passed until one night, before dawn, they saw a strange sight. From out of the interior of the forest came two apes, a bigger one and a somewhat smaller one (soon after it became clear that they were male and female). They were rather slim. They both went into the direction of the ambush. They had long hair on their bodies, including the face, except the eye sockets, mouth, palm and sole. As the male lifted the fish trap and began to tip it over to get the fish, everyone went towards the apes, captured them, tied them up and took them to their village. When a team of scientists in Duc My got news of this event, they went immediately with some South Korean soldiers to visit the village." Recon Hiun was at this time the director of the Department for the Development of Ethnic Minorities of Khanh Hoa province. He was also there as was another eyewitness. "The captured ape couple were bound onto two house posts with ropes. The South Korean soldiers then carefully shaved all the hair from their faces and also thoroughly washed both apes. The male was then put by his guards into a striped suit and the female was put into a sarong and Yeng of the Ede women. Both apparently did not know the use of language."*

Mr Recom Hiun said that after that the South Korean soldiers took the captured ape couple directly by airplane to their base at Duc My (Ninh Hoa - Khanh Hoa). Where they were taken from there, nobody knows.

The reports of Vietnamese wildmen continued after the war. In the years 1977-78, the biologist Tran Hong Viet, Director of the Department of Zoology at the Pedagogic University of Hanoi No 1, had the opportunity to study the fauna of Tay Nguyen.

In the course of his studies he told local people stories about the forest man. After hearing the stories, these people told him they knew that these creatures existed and they led him directly to a set of footprints which were clearly preserved on a narrow path leading over a mountain, at the base of which was a valley which nobody had ever visited. Mr Viet took a plaster cast of one of the footprints after having photographed it. This cast is still in the collection of the Pedagogic University of Hanoi No 1. The track, which Mr Ngo Hoang described from his experiences in 1950, matched the track in the photo taken by Tran Hong Viet. This led Ngo Hong to make the statement that "In Vietnam there are forest men, there could be no doubt about that."

In 1982, Viet again found and made a cast of a footprint measuring 28 centimetres by 16 centimetres.. The print, while in the range of a human foot in length was much wider than a human foot. The toes were also much longer than that of a human. The print was located on the slopes of the Mom Ray Mountain, near the Cambodian Border in the Kontum Province. The existence of the Nguoi Rung has had an effect on local culture in the Central Highlands, stories of strange gorilla like ape-men living in remote areas of the jungle that hunt humans are imbedded in their lore. The ape-men are said to hunt humans, and upon catching them, hold them captive. The ape-man is said to stand staring at the sky, making sounds like hysterical laughter until nightfall, then the ape-man proceeds to eat the captured man. Apparently, if the ape-men outnumbered the humans, they would attack them and eat them, but if the humans outnumbered the ape-men, the ape-men would run away. The local villagers are so convinced these stories are true, it has become a custom to wear bamboo tubes around their arms so that if they are captured, they can slide their arms from the tubes and escape the ape-men.

Not only have the ape-men tales affected native culture, it has shown up in geographic names for some local regions. There is a jungle in the Central Highlands called "gorilla jungle" named so because workers found footprints like those of a gorilla, as well as the many reports the villagers from this area tell of strange brown-haired animals, like men or apes. Its interesting to note that the villagers living in these remote areas have never heard or seen anything describing part human ape-men from other parts of the world, yet they describe the ape-men very closely to what is said of some of the various ape-men described across the globe.

On the border between China and the former Soviet Republic of Kazakhstan lie the Pamir Mountains from where there have been reports of wildmen from historical times to the present day. Again it is a geographic area that has historically been part of the sphere of Russian influence, and again it is a very wild land about which surprisingly little is known. Most of the best accounts of wildmen from the region come from Soviet Army personnel. This report from Major General Mikhail Topilsky is particularly interesting, as unlike most BHM reports worldwide, this does not refer to a shadowy figure seen fleetingly in the half darkness, but describes, in detail, a man-beast that was killed and examined in minute detail:

*"In the autumn of 1925, together with a scouting party we were engaged in tracking down a gang of anti-Soviet guerrillas which was operating in the Western Pamirs. They were trying to shake us off by going to the Sinkiang via the Eastern Pamirs. On our way through the highland villages in the Vanch district we had heard stories about hairy man-beasts, monstrous creatures (I don't remember the local name for them) that lived in the mountains. They were said to be hostile to humans; although they didn't usually attack first.(...)*

*Once when we were following the gang's tracks along a mountain path and had already reached the permanent snow-line, we saw some tracks running across the path. Our dog took up the scent but refused to follow the tracks. They were very clear and there could be no doubt they were the prints of bare human feet.*

*They continued for some 150 metres and stopped at the foot of a sheer, barren cliff, which a man could hardly have climbed. Our doctor studied the tracks thoroughly and decided that they were human footprints beyond all doubt (...)*

*Continuing our chase, we caught up with what was left of the exhausted gang, which had stopped for a rest at a place where the glacier was split apart by a stone cliff. The upper tongue of the glacier hung from the cliff, in which there was a crevice or cave. We surrounded the gang and took up a position above where*

*they were resting. A machine-gun was placed in position. When we threw the first grenade, a man (a Russian officer) ran out onto the glacier and started shouting that the shooting would make the ice cave in and that everyone would be buried. When we demanded that they surrender he asked for time to talk it over with the other guerrillas, and went back into the cave. Soon after, we heard an ominous hissing as the ice began to move. At almost the same moment we heard shots, and not knowing what they meant decided that it was the beginning of an assault.*

*Pieces of ice and snow started falling down from the cliff, gradually burying the entrance to the cave. When it was almost buried three men managed to escape, and the rest (we learned later that there were five) were buried under the debris. Our shots killed two of the guerrillas and seriously wounded the third.(...)*

*We questioned him and he gave us the following information. While they were discussing our order to surrender, some hairy, man-like creatures, howling inarticulately, appeared in the cave through a crevice (which possibly led upwards from the cave). There were several of them, and they had staves in their hands. The men tried to shoot their way through. One of the guerrillas was clubbed to death by the creatures. Our narrator received a blow from a staff on his left shoulder as he rushed to the cave entrance with one of the monsters hard on his heels. It ran out of the cave after him, but was shot and buried under a snowslide.*

*To check up on this strange story we made him show us the exact spot and cleared the snow away. We recovered the body all right. it had been shot three times. Not far off we found a stick made of very hard wood. At first glance I thought the body was that of an ape: it was covered all over with hair. But I knew there were no apes in the Pamirs. Also, the body itself looked very much like that of a man. We tried pulling the hair, to see if it was just a hide used for disguise, but found that it was the creature's own natural hair. We turned the body over several times onto its back and its front, and measured it. Our doctor (who was killed later that year) made a long and thorough inspection of the body, and it was clear that it was not a human being.*

*The body belonged to a male creature 165-170 centimetres tall, elderly or even old, judging by the greyish colour of the hair in several places. The chest was covered with brownish hair and the belly with greyish hair. The hair was longer but sparser on the chest and close-cropped and thick on the belly. In general the hair was very thick, without any underfur. There was least hair on the buttocks, from which fact our doctor deduced that the creature sat like a human being. There was most hair on the hips. The knees were completely devoid of hair and had callous growths on them. The whole foot including the sole was quite hairless, and was covered by hard brown skin. The shoulders and arms were also covered with hair which got thinner near the hands, and the palms had none at all, but only callous skin. The colour of the face was dark, and the creature had neither beard nor moustache. The back of the head was covered by thick, matted hair. The dead creature lay with its eyes open and its teeth bared. The eyes were dark, and the teeth were large and even and shaped like human teeth. The forehead was slanting and eyebrows were very powerful. The prominent cheekbones made the face resemble the Mongol type of face. The nose was flat, with a deeply sunk bridge. The ears were hairless and looked a little more pointed than a human being's with a longer lobe. The lower jaw was very massive.*

*The creature had a very powerful broad chest and well developed muscles. We didn't find any important anatomical differences between it and man. The genitalia were like man's. The arms were of normal length, the hands were slightly wider and the feet much wider and shorter than man's.*

*We did not know exactly where we were, because no accurate maps of the Pamirs were then in existence. But we must have been somewhere between the Yazgulem and the Rushan Ranges. As we had completed our task we had to return. (...) The nature of the dead creature presented us with a problem. But it was impossible to take the body with us on difficult trek that lay ahead. Also, it could have caused complications with the local population. We could say, of course, that we were carrying the body of an animal, but the creature looked too much like a human being. We thought about skinning it, but it was too much like skinning a man. In the end we decided to bury the creature where we had found it. We did not try to enter the cave because we were afraid of another cave-in."*

Another account of a close encounter with one of the wildmen of the Pamir Mountains comes from the pen of B.M.Zdorik, a geologist, who is a resident of Alma-Ata, Kazakhstan, and who worked in the Pamirs between 1926 and 1938. In a long account, sent to Boris Porshnev in 1959 and published in *The Information Materials of the Snowman Commission*, he wrote:

*“In the autumn of 1929, preparing for a hunt, I asked the locals about the fauna in the district. The chairman of the Tutkaul Soviet gave me the following list of local wild animals: wild boar, bear, red wolf, hyena, porcupine, jackal and dev. I was surprised to hear the last name as part of the animal kingdom because according to my previous information `dev` or `div` was a character of Tajik fairy-tales. But here the headman of the locality told me that the dev resembled a thickset man, that it walked on two legs and was covered with brown or black hair. According to the headman, the dev was encountered very rarely in the Sanglakh Mountains, but did turn up now and again either alone or in pairs, male and female. He had never seen young ones, but during the previous summer the Tajiks had caught a grown one alive at a mill on the eastern slopes of the mountain ridge, only a few kilometres from Tutkaul. They kept the dev chained up for two months, feeding it with raw meat and flatcakes of barley flour. Eventually the dev broke its chain and escaped. I did not believe the story and the headman then showed me a villager allegedly injured by a dev. The man had indeed a large scar on the head, but the encounter allegedly so much affected his mind that he was unable to tell me anything intelligible. I then decided that the injury could have been done by a wild boar. Once in 1934, I climbed with much difficulty one of the flat mountaintops in the upper reaches of the Dondushkan. My Tajik guide and I were making our way along a network of narrow paths made by a colony of marmots in the high alpine grass. Suddenly, a small area opened up in front of us on which the grass was completely flattened, and the ground dug up as if with a spade. On the path were drops of blood and scraps of what looked like marmot fur. And there, right at my very feet, on a heap of freshly dug earth, an unknown creature lay asleep. It was lying fully stretched out on its stomach, about a metre and a half or so in length. I could not see the head and front limbs very well as they were hidden by a bundle of withered grass. I did manage to see the legs and the bare black feet which were too long and too well shaped to be a bear's. But the back was too flat for a bear. The whole body of the animal was covered with shaggy hair looking more like yak's wool than the downy pelt of a bear. The hair colour was reddish-brown, redder than I have ever seen on a bear. The creature's flanks rose and fell rhythmically as it slept. I stood there frozen with surprise, and at a loss as to what to do. I looked back at my Tajik guide who was following close behind me. He was standing there stupefied, his face as white as a sheet. Then with a gesture he pulled me silently by the sleeve and indicated that we must run at once. Never before had I seen such an expression of terror on a man's face. His fear communicated itself to me, and beside ourselves, without glancing backwards at the creature, we both fled away down the path, enmeshing ourselves and stumbling about in the high grass...*

*It was only the following day that I learned from the Tajiks, who were rather alarmed by the event, that we had stumbled upon a sleeping dev. They also used some other name for the creature but I don't remember it. According to the inhabitants of the Talbara and Saffedara valleys there were several families of those devs, males, females, and young, living in the mountains. The creatures were considered to be of the animal kingdom, and not supernatural beings, but it was considered to be an evil omen to meet one.”*

One of the most notable things about these and other accounts from what was once Soviet Central Asia is that although investigators invariably consider them to be pre-human, the people who live there and who have contact with these creatures on a regular basis consider them to be animals rather than intellectual, biological or social equals. The reports of Almas or Almasty range across the region from Georgia in the west to Mongolia in the east but always the accounts are remarkably close to each other. According to eyewitnesses the facial features consist of prominent eyebrows, recessed eyes, backward sloping forehead, conical skull, short neck and a very powerful jaw structure. The females of the species have very long breasts that have to be slung over the shoulder when in the running mode.

The International Bigfoot Network describes some of the research that has been done in Mongolia by Professor Rinchen, a member of the Faculty of the University of Ulan-Bator. Once again we are faced with evidence that suggests that whatever they are, the Almasty are close enough to modern man to be genetically compatible.

*“In his search for clues to the origins of the Almas, Rinchen came across the product of a human- Almas relationship. A Lama studying at the Lamin-gegen monastery is alleged to have had a father who had been carried away by a group of Almas and during his time with them he was able to father a son by a female Almas. When a passing caravan happened on the scene sometime later, the man and his son managed to escape and return to Mongolian society. The boy proved to be highly intelligent and was so academically brilliant that he had no trouble in being accepted by the lamasery where he became a noted scholar.”*

One of the biggest problems when researching fortan phenomena especially at second hand is that when one is faced with a statement like the one pointed immediately above it is almost impossible to check it. Indeed, on a number of occasions during our researches we have found that a number of reputable and well respected sources have quoted, and re-quoted a piece of information that was not only erroneous in the first place but was credited to someone who never actually existed. This quasi-academic extension of the old parlour game of `Chinese Whispers` is often quite innocently done, and we are sure that we have been unwittingly guilty of this a number of times during our careers. Whenever possible, therefore, we do our best to verify that the people we have quoted are, indeed, bona fide sources. Our attempts to contact Professor Rinchen in order to get him to confirm this story, however, were fruitless.

We did, however, manage to confirm that Professor Rinchen Barbold is a well-known member of the faculty and an expert on vertebrate palaeontology. He has written widely on subjects compatible with a deep interest in cryptozoology, and for the moment, therefore, until we are faced with any evidence to the contrary, we shall let is evidence stand. Another tantalising story from Mongolia, and this time one whose provenance is slightly easier to verify comes from Mr. Damdin of the State Museum of Ulan Bator who spent several months in the Khovd and Bayanolyg provinces, wrote:

*“It was happened at about ten o’clock of 26th June, 1953. I remembered the time, day and month because this day had utterly surprised myself and was engraved on my heart. At dawn of that day I went to search my lost camels in the direction of the so called Red Mountain of the Almas, It was a beautiful sunny morning when I dropped into the ravines, The wind spread a fragrance of highland flowers and herbs but I was in a hurry to leave before a midday heat this labyrinth of canyons and ravines. My camel climber up and down in craggy defile. Suddenly I saw in the corner of secluded ravine under two small ammodendron bushes something of camel-colour.*

*I approached and saw a hairy corpse of a robust humanlike creature dried and half buried by sand. I had never seen such humanlike being covered by camel-colour brownish-yellow short hairs and I recoiled, although in my native land of Sinkiang I had seen many dead men killed in battle. But who was this strange dead thing - man or beast? I decided to return back and thoroughly examine it. I approached once more and looked down from my camel. The dead thing was not a bear or an ape and at the same time it was not a man like Mongol and Kazakh or Chinese and Russian. The hairs of its head were longer than its body. The skin on its groin and armpits was darkened and shriveled like the hide of a dead camel. I have also examined a terrain near its body and never found any rests or wears. Fear seized my heart. I remembered the old tales of Vetala-Vampires and thought I was to see before me one of them. And I hurried away. After my return home I had informed our local administration and Mr. Chimeddorje, manager of Fruit Growing Station, but anyone gave attention to my account.”*

Many researchers including the present authors believe that the elusive Almas of Mongolia represent some of the best chances that contemporary scientists will ever have of seeing a living hominid. After all, the sightings, which have continued to the present day, have been occurring for a very long time. The earliest known printed reference to the Almas was by Hans Schiltberger, from Bavaria. In the 1420's he travelled through the Tien Shan mountains as a prisoner to the Mongols, in a journal he kept he wrote:

*“In the mountains themselves live a wild people, who have nothing in common with other human beings, a pelt covers the entire body of these creatures. Only the hands and face are free of hair. They run around in the hills like animals and eat foliage and grass and whatever else they can find. The Lord of the Territory made Egidi a present of a couple of forest people, a man and a woman, together with three untamed horses*

*the sizes of asses and all sorts of other animals which are not found in German lands and which I cannot therefore put a name to."*

With the new political openness across the former Soviet Union and its allies, western expeditions are now able to enter areas that have been forbidden to their forebears. In Mongolia alone, for example, according to the August 1998 edition of *Fortean Times* there were no less than four expeditions searching for various zoological anomalies including the fabled 'Death Worm'. The Centre for Fortean Zoology carried out its own Death Worm expedition in the spring of 2005 in Mongolia. Surely it is only a matter of time before someone returns with conclusive evidence that our genetic cousins still roam the wilder places of our planet?

Our old friend and colleague Dr Karl Shuker has also theorised about the link between putative hominid survival and the Eurasian myths of lecherous wildmen. Writing in "*The Unexplained*" (Carleton 1995) he notes:

*"In Greek mythology satyrs were semi-humans with hairy legs, hooves, tail and short horns of goats: But did they have a basis in reality? This unexpected prospect was raised in a stimulating paper published in the scientific journal 'Human Evolution' in 1994 by Dr Helmut Loofs-Wissowa from the Australian National University's Faculty of Asian Studies. In ancient classical art satyrs were frequently portrayed with a prominently erect penis even when engaged in non-sexual activity. Indeed, it was this characteristic that earned them their reputation for sexual licentiousness. However, Dr Loofs-Wissowa believes that all this is fallacious and in fact the satyrs were displaying a physiological condition known as 'penis rectus' in which the penis assumes a horizontal position even when flaccid. Among modern humans this condition is only recorded amongst the Bushmen of South Africa, but is often portrayed in prehistoric cave art including some Upper Palaeolithic examples from Europe in which the figures exhibiting penis rectus condition are hairy humanoids".*

As Shuker points out, this is quite good supportive evidence for the continuing existence of Neanderthals at least into the times of the Classical Greeks. Other writers including Francis Hitching (in "*The World Atlas of Mysteries*") had also drawn the conclusions that the classical satyrs were in fact surviving Neanderthals so this seemed a particularly interesting line of enquiry.

Loren Coleman and Patrick Huyghe - the authors of: "*The Field Guide to Bigfoot, Yeti, and Other Mystery Primates Worldwide*" (New York: Avon Books, 1999) disagree and believe that the available evidence leads towards the creation of yet another putative mystery hominoid:

*"The Erectus Hominid is probably the least known of the world's mystery hominids. The reason for this is simple: most of the beings in this class have in the past been misidentified as Neanderthal. The Erectus Hominid is human-sized to about six feet tall. Its body is also within the standard human range with a slight barrelling of the chest. They are partially to fully hairy, with head hair longer than their body hair. The males of the class normally display a semi-erect penis."*