

STRATIGRAPHY ON THE PLANET OF THE APES

By Patrick Michael Tilton

In the Cave scene in PLANET, Zaius says, "Present your evidence, Cornelius."

We see Cornelius on the topmost level of the Cave's floor (let's call it "Ground Zero" to indicate that "zero" time has elapsed since it became the ground level of the Present Day from their standpoint in the latter half of the 40th Century).

Cornelius then steps down onto the next-to-the-top level (let's call this "Ground One" in that it is one "time period" removed from Ground Zero's present time, dating back to a Past era), and he says: "It was at this level that I discovered traces of an early ape creature... a stage of primitive barbarism, really, dating back some thirteen hundred years, roughly."

Cornelius then steps down another level (let's call this "Ground Two" in that it is two "time periods" removed from the Present "Ground Zero" level he began at) and he says: "It was at this level... I discovered cutting tools and arrowheads of quartz, and the fossilized bones of carnivorous gorillas."

Cornelius then steps down towards where Taylor's standing and proceeds over to a tarp on the "Ground Zero" level. He says, "But the artifacts lying here..." -- and he pulls the tarp up to reveal the objects that had been hidden beneath it -- "... were found..." -- and he then steps down to an even deeper level adjacent to where Zaius is standing. Let's call this level "Ground Three" in that it represents a stratigraphic level three "time periods" removed from the Present time. He continues: "... at this level, and date back, uh, seven hundred years earlier. That's the paradox... for the more ancient culture is the more advanced. Now, admittedly, many of these objects are unidentified; but clearly they were fashioned by beings with a knowledge of metallurgy. Indeed, the fact that many of these tools are unknown to us suggests a culture which, in certain ways, equals our own." He adds, "The Human Doll... The doll was found beside the jawbone of a Man, and no trace of simian fossil has been found in this deposit." Taylor asks, "You say these things [the "false teeth"... the "eyeglasses" and the "prefabricated valve" of an artificial heart] were found at the same level as that doll?" and Cornelius nods a Yes.

Here's the gist of it:

Ground ZERO: the Present level of the tiered layers of dust or silt.

Ground ONE: roughly 1,300 years BP (Before Present), where he found "traces" of an early ape creature at a stage of Primitive Barbarism... a mere century before the writing of the Sacred Scrolls, if we are to believe Zaius' dating of the Lawgiver (which I do).

Ground TWO: cutting tools... quartz arrowheads... carnivorous gorillas.

Ground THREE: the "more advanced" society with Metallurgy... the world dominated by Man at the time when he destroyed his own civilization.

First off, let's examine Cornelius' dating of the deepest level (Ground THREE) as dating "back 700 years earlier"... Earlier than When? He must be referring to the artifacts TWO LEVELS UP (i.e. what I call Ground ONE), which he had dated back "1300 years, roughly" from the Present. He isn't and cannot be dating Ground THREE back seven hundred years from the level in-between the two, since we know that the general dating scheme -- no matter what Zaius might think of it -- is accurate: the 1300 years added to the 700 years equals the "roughly" 2,000 years separating the end of the 20th Century (and the human-waged Nuclear War) from the end of the 40th Century... the "twenty centuries" Taylor nags Landon about.

But, at first glance, it seems as if Cornelius was dating the deepest level to a period 700 years earlier from the next level up, rather than the level two steps up from it (and one step down from the Present level). Since Cornelius never gave a time interval separating Ground TWO from Ground ONE (or from Ground TWO to Ground THREE either, for that matter), then it seems reasonable to say that Ground TWO represents an intermediate era, somewhere between 1,300 years BP and 2,000 BP, since it lies between those two levels of stratigraphical ground. Thus, the "carnivorous gorillas" would be dated to somewhere between -- halfway? -- 1300 BP and 2000 BP... let's say, splitting the difference just for fun, about 1,650 BP, or to around the beginning of the 24th Century (i.e. A.D. 2300, roughly).

But here's the kicker... and a possible problem for us. When Cornelius exposes the artifacts that were under the tarp -- the artifacts that date back to our time, the level at which "no trace of simian fossil" had been found -- we can clearly see a SKULL amongst the bones. And that skull sure as hell looks more like an APE skull than a HUMAN skull, doesn't it? Cornelius mentions "the jawbone of a Man" having been near the Human Doll. This pithecoid skull that had been beneath the tarp, though, still has its jawbone attached to it.

What do the rest of you think? Is this a "flub"? Am I misinterpreting this? If Cornelius had found no trace of simian fossil at that deepest level, and if those artifacts under the tarp -- including that apish skull -- were found at that deepest level... isn't this a goof on the part of the filmmakers? That skull doesn't look like a human skull to me. It looks like the kind of skull we would expect to find under the dermis of a POTA-style Ape.

Cornelius had earlier mentioned having found "the fossilized bones of carnivorous gorillas" at the level I refer to in the article as "Ground TWO." Presumably, those gorillas made use of "cutting tools" -- to cut meat off of prey-animals, perhaps? -- and "arrowheads of quartz" with which they killed their prey, using bow-and-arrow. Might these prey-animals have perhaps been Humans? Did these carnivorous gorillas hunt, kill, and EAT humans in that era more than a century before the writing of the Sacred Scrolls by the Lawgiver?

I mentioned how it seems to be a discrepancy for Cornelius to have said that "no trace of simian fossil has been found in this deposit" [i.e. at "Ground THREE" level], and yet had revealed amongst the items found at that level, under the tarp, a pithecooid skull with a jawbone still attached.

I have a suggestion which could, perhaps, account for this seeming discrepancy. Cornelius had mentioned "the fossilized bones of carnivorous gorillas"... but we never specifically see any such fossils at the level Cornelius indicates they were found [i.e. "Ground TWO"]. Perhaps Cornelius took the skull (and jawbone) of one or more of those carnivorous gorillas and brought them over to the deepest level ["Ground THREE"] in order to compare fossil items from the two stratigraphic levels. Only by comparing the human fossils he had found at Ground THREE with the carnivorous gorilla fossils he'd found at Ground TWO could he ascertain the distinct natures of these two different species.

So, those gorilla fossils were not found at that deepest level, but AFTER Cornelius found them at the next-level-up, he brought them over to the earlier stratum so as to compare them with the strictly human fossils at the earliest stratum. He probably should have taken those gorilla fossils back to the stratum he had found them, but he hadn't gotten around to doing so before Zaius

showed up with his strike team of gorillas.

I should also point out that even though no simian fossils were found at that lowest stratum, and though he never mentions finding HUMAN fossils at the stratum I call Ground TWO (where the carnivorous gorillas were found), there is the possibility that those gorillas had eaten human flesh, having disposed of the bones by throwing them outside the Cave, where they might have been found prior to the first exploration of the Cave.

When Cornelius (and whoever else may have helped him in his excavation of that site a year earlier) first found the Cove, he undoubtedly saw the entrance to the Cave and thought it would be a good idea to look inside it. Prior to building the wooden platform and ramp leading up to that Cave entrance, Cornelius would've noticed any particularly interesting artifacts that may have been lying on the ground right outside the Cave. Perhaps the tumulus heap of gnawed-on bones discarded by the meat-eaters who lived in that Cave. Cornelius would be enough of an archaeological expert to ascertain that a bone had been gnawed on, being that there would be teeth marks in it, as well as the marks made by the "cutting tools" used to strip flesh from bone. Also, if bones were cracked open, it would seem logical that the carnivore had been attempting to get at the bone marrow within.

So, I suggest that Cornelius took the skulls of the carnivorous gorillas and attempted to match up the TEETH MARKS on bones found elsewhere throughout the dig site. Perhaps the bones of the humans found at the deepest stratum (i.e. the victims of the Nuclear War) had strange markings on them, and Cornelius perhaps thought to compare the gorilla bite-marks with the markings on the earlier human bones.

Evidently, he wasn't able to match up the two, so that he concluded that there was no trace of simian fossil -- i.e. no simian presence -- at that lowest stratum. However, I would conclude that Cornelius did find matches between the gorilla skull-teeth and BITE-MARKS on the bones that he (probably) found outside the Cave. Cornelius refers to those gorillas as "carnivorous" -- and he wouldn't have done so without a reason. How does one ascertain whether or not a long-dead person was carnivorous? Well, the act of biting (gnawing, etc.) wears on the teeth, and also

produces teething marks -- bite marks -- on the bones of the prey animals. As a scientist, Cornelius would have some idea of what herbivorous gorilla teeth look like -- say, when a gorilla from his era dies a natural death. We know that Zira did "comparative anatomy" (Apes and Humans) in her laboratory, making use of Ape corpses when they had died a natural death. The Apes in 3955 were not carnivorous, so that a gorilla, upon dying, would leave behind a corpse with teeth that had munched on fruits and vegetables. The standard diet would leave tell-tale signs on the teeth, insofar as those teeth had to regularly chew on their dietary foodstuffs. Cornelius could probably have been able to figure out the approximate age of an herbivorous gorilla (or chimp or orang) based on the amount of wear-and-tear on the teeth they left behind.

Comparing such teeth to the teeth found on the skulls of those gorillas who had lived in the Cave a century or more before the time of the Lawgiver, would've informed Cornelius that those long-dead gorillas had, indeed, been carnivores. The wearing on their teeth, and the comparative bite-marks on the bones of their prey animals would prove this to his satisfaction -- i.e. he would be confident of his conclusion to affirmatively state that those gorillas had been carnivores, flesh-eaters, as controversial as such a conclusion might have been.

I imagine that it was somewhat galling for Zaius to hear Cornelius refer to an Ape -- even a gorilla -- as "carnivorous". Zaius quibbles with Cornelius' interpretations to a certain degree, even going so far as to make fun of his methods of dating the past. But Zaius does not attempt to ridicule Cornelius' conclusion that the gorilla fossils indicate carnivorism. Why not? Why not say that it's sheer nonsense to believe that an Ape would eat flesh?

I think that Zaius knew that in that era there were "primitive" gorillas who survived by having resorted to carnivorism. Perhaps having been driven to it by desperation.

And... perhaps those gorillas also resorted to carnivorous Cannibalism, also out of desperation. Perhaps, when the Lawgiver arrived on-the-scene a century or more later, one of the things he established was a new law making it a crime to eat flesh. No ape (especially a gorilla, who is known to have been carnivorous) may eat the

flesh of any of God's creatures -- not horse-flesh, not man-flesh, and most certainly not ape-flesh!

I suspect that the reason most laws ever get written is to stop and prevent certain behaviors from happening -- i.e. it is a reaction to the despicable actions of a community by those who wish to reform them. To give an example, in Leviticus (18:23) it says that "... you shall not lie with any beast and defile yourself with it, neither shall any woman give herself to a beast to lie with it: it is perversion." If the Israelites had never participated in any act of bestiality, then it is doubtful that Moses would have to have this law specifically outlawing such behavior. Imagine the Israelites being told not to have sex with animals... and they, having never done so, wondering why in hell Moses felt he had to make such unthinkable behavior a crime. It's only when such behaviors are actually happening -- and upsetting those who want to ban such behaviors -- that the laws get written to specifically address the matter. The Israelites -- at least some of them - - had to have been participating in acts of bestiality, so as to require a law to be imposed upon them to get them to stop doing such "perversion". Similarly, I suspect that one of the laws that the Lawgiver had to impose on the Apes was a law outlawing the eating of animal flesh. That would include the eating of Human flesh and (cannibalistically) Ape flesh.

Zaius, knowing that there had been a time when carnivorous gorillas were around, chose not to disparage Cornelius for concluding this after he had seen the tell-tale evidence of it in the bones of the creatures he had excavated.

