

Tracing the Journey of Man

Spencer Wells

National Geographic Society



Perhaps the oldest question asked by humans is “where did we come from?” Since the dawn of human history, people have sought answers to this question in mythology, philosophy, and religion. In modern times, archeology and anthropology have shed new light on the question while framing it in more scientific terms. Now, a brilliant young scientist has found an answer to this ancient question in the blood coursing through our veins-and that of our fellow humans living around the world today.

As documented in a book and a PBS/National Geographic Channel film, both entitled *The Journey of Man: A Genetic Odyssey*, Dr. Spencer Wells has learned to read the story of human prehistory in our living genetic code. By analyzing changes in the human Y chromosome-which mutates at a predictable rate but otherwise remains unchanged from generation to generation --Wells has traced the journey of biologically modern humankind. “Each drop of blood is a historical document,” says Wells. “Our DNA tells the story of the journey of our species.”

Wells’ research indicates that modern Homo sapiens emerged from eastern or southern Africa - indeed that all modern humans are descended from a single man who lived in Africa around 60,000 years ago. Only since that time, about 2,000 generations ago, have modern humans spread out to populate the entire globe. “We’re all effectively cousins, separated by 2,000 generations,” Wells says.

Recently, Wells has been named a National Geographic Fellow. This gifted and eloquent young pioneer will share his most recent discoveries about the ongoing human journey, and outline plans for the Genographic Project, an ambitious new initiative he leads for the National Geographic Society.

* This program is presented in association with **National Geographic Live!**, a mission program of speakers and events that brings the National Geographic experience to communities worldwide.