

Letters & news from around the region

Letter from Nauru

I would just like to salute Thomas Malm for his article in the last bulletin (“Searching for clues in the lagoon: Is marine gathering a reflection of our evolutionary past?” *SPC Women In Fisheries Information Bulletin* 20: 10-16. (http://www.spc.int/coastfish/news/WIF/WIF20/WIF20_10_Malm.pdf)).

Ever since I read Elaine Morgan’s book “The Descent of Woman” as an undergraduate I kept the (semi) aquatic ape hypothesis in the back of my mind. As a non-anthropological fisheries scientist I lacked the training to follow it up, but later, as a research manager, I felt that it ought to be followed up, and in 1996 I corresponded with Elaine Morgan with the intention of writing a brief article in an SPC Bulletin, similar to Malm’s, that brought the possibility to the attention of the Pacific Island research community.

Sadly, I never got around to writing that article, so I’m very glad that Malm has now raised the same issue, and in a much more authoritative and lucid fashion that I could have mustered.

Fifteen years ago the Aquatic Ape Hypothesis was anathema to the community of professional researchers who studied human origins, and anyone who raised it was likely to suffer severe attrition of their reputation. Even Sir Alister Hardy, who originally proposed it in 1960, never followed it up, and it was left to Elaine Morgan to bring it to the world’s attention — the beginning of a fight for recognition that lasted through several decades of scorn.

However, the hypothesis has never been convincingly debunked. It has withstood the test of academic criticism, as all hypotheses must, and is finally beginning to achieve recognition as a potentially valid explanation of part of the adaptive history of the human race. Indeed it has now entered the mainstream to the extent that Sir Richard Attenborough recently made a two-part radio broadcast in the UK (“The Scars of Evolution” which can be obtained from the BBC Radio 4 website).

Why is this important? It is obviously important in the study of human origins, and in unravelling the story of how we populated the globe, but I feel that it is also important in the fisheries world — to understand the primal significance of shallow-water fisheries and in explaining some of the deeper motivations underlying the way we interact with marine resources.

Fisheries conservation and management may have far more ancient roots than any of us realise, and women must have played a seminal part in that process.

Dr Tim Adams

Nauru Fisheries and Marine Resources Authority (NFMRA)

Villagers rescue fish as pond dries

By Felix Chaudhary

Source: Fiji times online, Wednesday, 29 September 2010

Two months ago this was a pond full of tilapia at Drauniivi, Ra, Fiji. Villagers of Draunivi, Rakiraki, made an unprecedented fish evacuation last week to save hundreds of threatened tilapia hatchlings from certain death.

The operation occurred as the village lost a vital source of food and income when prolonged heat completely dried up its only tilapia farm. Villagers noticed that water in the freshwater fish pond began receding in July.

“We noticed the fish struggling to stay alive in the little water that was left, so we got buckets and moved the remaining fish to a nearby river to give them a chance to live,” said farmer Savenaca Mamasavou. There was only a few hundred fish left compared to the thousands that were there before the drought,” Mr Mamasavou said.

He said the drought-like conditions had also impacted on their only source of drinking water, a borehole that was partially funded by Fiji Water, which operates a water bottling plant just a few kilometres from the village. “We receive assistance for the pumping of water from the borehole from Fiji Water but because of the cost of pumping we only have access to water for one hour in the morning and one hour in the evening.

“During that time we have to collect enough to cater for our drinking, bathing and washing needs.” Mr Mamasavou said the village was struggling to cope with only one source of water available to the 700 residents.

“We used to get water that was piped from a catchment up in the hills and a spring near the village but they have all dried up now. Things were better then, because we had a few sources of water,” the farmer said.



Yemaya mama... feels left out

Source: *Yemaya*, ICSF's Newsletter on gender and fisheries No. 32, November 2009.

<http://icsf.net/icsf2006/ControllerServlet?handler=YEMAYA&code=viewPubn&issueno=32>

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