THE AQUATIC APE: Fact or Fiction?

The first scientific evaluation of a controversial theory of human evolution

Edited by:
MACHTELD ROEDE
JAN WIND
JOHN PATRICK
VERNON REYNOLDS

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It is generally accepted that humans descended from an ape-like creature which, about five million years ago, abandoned life in the trees to take the first hesitating steps towards bipedalism. There remains an area of dispute, however. Was the new environment the savannah, as is generally believed, or a region of water and marshland as suggested by Sir Alister Hardy in 1960?

Advocates of the Aquatic Ape Theory have been increasing in number in recent years, due largely to the arguments of Elaine Morgan who published the first book on the subject, *The Descent of Woman,* in 1972. However, the Savannah Theory has remained the established orthodoxy.

This book, derived from the first international symposium on the subject, held at Valkenburg in the Netherlands in 1987, reflects the lively debate among the participating scientists of many disciplines, exploring the pros and cons of both theories and attempting to reconstruct the features and ecological niche of our early hominid ancestors. The conference papers, largely rewritten for this book, range back and forth over geography and fossil material, geological and palaeontological evidence, evolutionary biology and physiological characteristics. Some relevant contributions have been added by scientists not present at the conference, and a balance has been sought between younger and more senior scholars.

The result is the first serious discussion for and against the theory which claims, among others, that our ancestors stood up on two legs to wade through water. Illustrated with photographs, drawings and maps, it is likely to become a standard work on the subject, and to provide a stimulus for much further discussion.

£20.00

To Hugh
with all best wishes

Elaine

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