



Human bones from Fiji midden include 2.5-cm finger bone (middle).

"Except for fish, man was the most popular of the vertebrate animals used for food." So opined archaeologist E. W. Gifford of the University of California, Berkeley, in 1951 after finding pieces of human bone intermixed with animal remains at ancient sites in the Fiji Islands. Early 20th-century accounts

What Fijians Had for Dinner

from the South Pacific inspired many a cartoon of grass-skirted natives dancing around pots of missionaries being boiled—but modern archaeologists have felt that definitive proof of cannibalism was lacking.

Now, almost 50 years later, Berkeley grad student David DeGusta says he's got the goods. In what he calls "the first well-documented instance of cannibalism in Oceania," DeGusta analyzed the bones Gifford had collected from a midden, or refuse heap, on the island of Viti Levu that spanned 2000 years, as well as bones from a nearby human burial

site of the same vintage. DeGusta concluded from close examination of bone marks that the patterns of breaks, burns, and cut marks matched those found on the bones of various animals in the midden. By contrast, bones from the burial site "are essentially unmodified," he reports in the October issue of the *American Journal of Physical Anthropology*.

DeGusta has done a "nice piece of work. ... [His] evidence looks very convincing," says Christy Turner, an archaeologist at Arizona State University in Tempe who claims there is evidence for cannibalism among ancient inhabitants of the U.S. Southwest.

Aspirin's Paternity Debated

The German pharmaceutical giant Bayer AG has been celebrating the 100th anniversary of its invention of Aspirin, fettering the wonder drug in self-congratulatory ads. But the party mood faded last month when a Scottish chemist claimed to have new evidence that Aspirin's true inventor was lost to history because he was Jewish.

According to Bayer, staff chemist Felix Hoffmann was looking for a new painkiller to treat his father's rheumatism. He first synthesized acetylsalicylic acid in 1897, and Bayer began selling it in 1899 as Aspirin, a name Hoffmann suggested.

But Walter Sneader, a pharmaceutical scientist at Strathclyde University in Glasgow, told a 6 September meeting of Britain's Royal Society of Chemistry in Edinburgh that old lab notebooks show that Hoffmann's work was directed by his boss, a Jewish chemist named Arthur Eichengrün. Sneader believes Eichengrün's role was covered up during the Nazi era and that the company never corrected the record. Eichengrün himself made a

similar claim after the war.

Bayer spokesperson Hartmut Alsfasser says he is "personally hurt" by the charge and says Bayer's archives show that Hoffmann never worked under Eichengrün. He thinks Sneader

may be confusing Hoffmann with one Fritz Hofman, who did work for Eichengrün. Case closed? Sneader doesn't think so: He aims to publish a detailed history supporting Eichengrün's claim.

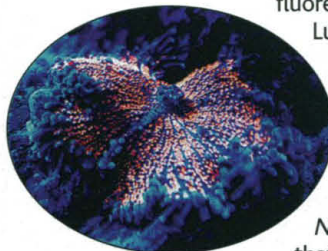
Coral Shows Its Colors

Scientists have extracted from corals six new fluorescing dye molecules—including one that glows red—that can be used to track the activity of proteins in living cells.

The jellyfish's green fluorescent protein (GFP) already enables researchers to study proteins in a variety of cells. Until now, biologists had thought GFP-like proteins existed only in bioluminescent—or light-producing—organisms. But evolutionary biologist Yuli Labas of the Institute of Ecology and Evolution in Moscow suspected that the ability to generate light might have evolved from organisms that transform light into different wavelengths—that is, fluoresce. So his colleagues, Sergey

Lukyanov and Mikhail Matz of the Institute of Bioorganic Chemistry, looked for GFP-like proteins in fluorescing corals.

The researchers scored hits in all five species studied, according to a report in the October issue of *Nature Biotechnology*. They speculate that such proteins, which may have given rise to GFP, are "dyes" that likely protect the corals from sunburn, says Matz.



Fluorescent coral under UV light.

The scientists have applied for a patent on the proteins, which Matz says could lead to "new multicolor, in vivo labeling and detection systems." More colors could allow scientists to monitor more cellular players simultaneously, notes Columbia University geneticist Martin Chalfie. "The red looks like a very good addition," he says.

RANDOM SAMPLES

edited by CONSTANCE HOLDEN

Particle Fishing

Earlier this week, a five-country team of scientists planned to toss a net into the Mediterranean to lay a trap for an unusual deep-sea quarry: neutrinos from the reaches of deep space. It was the first step in constructing



Optical modules being lowered into the sea.

a cubic-kilometer-sized underwater detector for tracking the elusive particles which, scientists hope, will offer clues about the origin of cosmic rays.

The "net" is a string of photomultiplier tubes—extremely sensitive light detectors—for ANTARES, an underwater neutrino telescope. The telescope works by sensing muons, particles created when neutrinos plow into atomic nuclei in the sea. The muons travel through water faster than light does, emitting flashes, called Čerenkov radiation, that reveal the direction and energy of incoming neutrinos.

When the 10,000-tube project is completed sometime in the next decade, physicists say it should be able to detect very rare neutrinos that pack 1 million times more energy than those registered by the world's largest existing underground detector, Japan's Superkamiokande.