

High seas may be responsible for Taiwan settlement

April 5 2011, by Deborah Braconnier



Satellite photo of Taiwan. Image: NASA

(PhysOrg.com) -- University of Hawaii archaeologists, led by Barry Rolett, have published a journal in *Quaternary Science Reviews* focusing on the early settlements of Taiwan. It is their belief that rising sea waters in China led to the movement of settlements.

According to Rolett and the others, 9,000 years ago when most of China was focused on rice farming, the Fuzhou Basin was being inundated by rising sea waters. What had once been an area full of marshes suitable for rice paddies, was then being covered with sea water. The water levels

were high enough that the mountain tops of the area were reduced to islands.

Analyzing [sediment cores](#) from the Fuzhou Basin, Rolett's team found evidence that flooding in the area began around 9,000 years ago, reaching its peak level some 7,000 years ago. The water levels appear to have remained at this higher level until what appears to have been a rapid decline some 2,000 years ago.

With residents of this area being reduced to small island living, these rice farmers were quickly forced to turn to a life in the water. These new found mariners used canoes and rafts for fishing. It was this new found proficiency in seafaring that Rolett believes enabled these people to make the 80-mile journey to [Taiwan](#), where evidence shows villages were established around 5,000 years ago.

Evidence discovered by Rolett and his team in both the Fuzhou Basin and Taiwan reveal similar pottery, which further supports his beliefs. Archaeological evidence shows that while there was 80 miles of water between these two civilizations, they showed similar characteristics, suggesting these villagers traveled from the Fuzhou Basin to Taiwan. Most likely traveling by bamboo boats with sails, further evidence shows that these new maritime travelers may have first traveled up and down the [China](#) coast, acquiring millet, a grain similar to rice and found in the Taiwan villages.

More information: Holocene sea-level change and the emergence of Neolithic seafaring in the Fuzhou Basin (Fujian, China), *Quaternary Science Reviews*, Volume 30, Issues 7-8, April 2011, Pages 788-797. [doi:10.1016/j.quascirev.2011.01.015](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.quascirev.2011.01.015)

Citation: High seas may be responsible for Taiwan settlement (2011, April 5) retrieved 26 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2011-04-high-seas-responsible-taiwan-settlement.html>

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