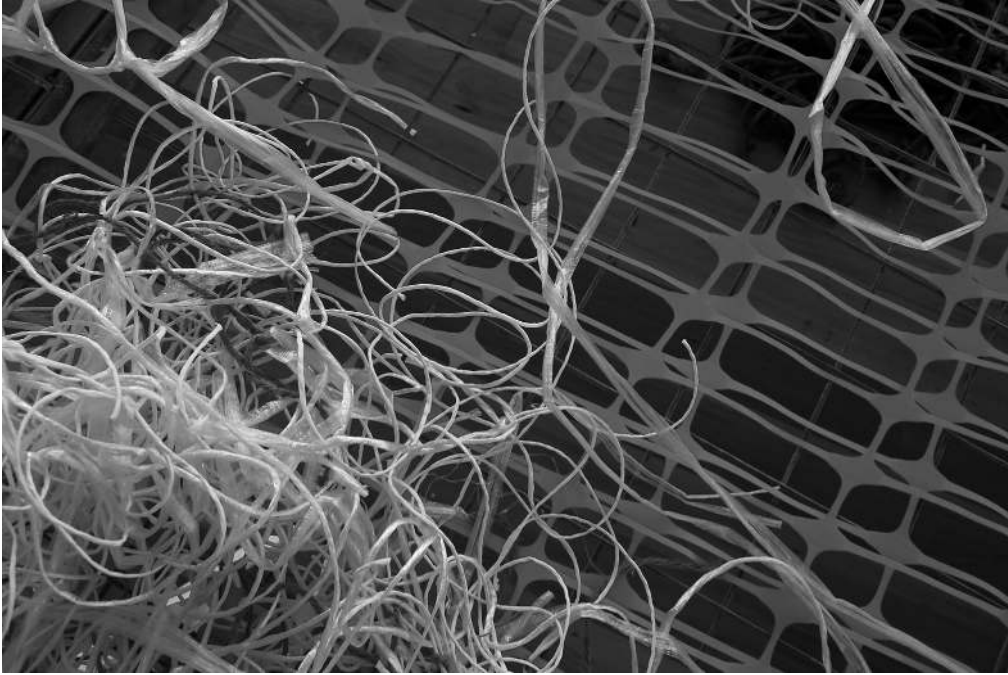


## CLIMATE, CLOTHING, AND AGRICULTURE IN PREHISTORY

Clothing was crucial in human evolution, and having to cope with climate change was as true in prehistory as it is today. In *Climate, Clothing, and Agriculture in Prehistory*, Ian Gilligan offers the first complete account of the development of clothing as a response to exposure to cold during the ice ages. He explores how and when clothes were invented, noting that the thermal motive alone is tenuous in view of the naked condition of humans. His account shows that there is considerably more archaeological evidence for Paleolithic clothes than is generally appreciated. Moreover, Gilligan posits, clothing played a leading role in major technological innovations. He demonstrates that fiber production and the advent of woven fabrics, developed in response to global warming, were pivotal to the origins of agriculture. Drawing together evidence from many disciplines, *Climate, Clothing, and Agriculture in Prehistory* is written in a clear and engaging style, and is illustrated with more than 100 images.

One of the world's leading authorities on the origins of clothing, Ian Gilligan holds university degrees in medicine, psychology, prehistoric archaeology, and biological anthropology, and is an honorary associate in the Department of Archaeology at the University of Sydney. He has authored a book on the clothing of Australian Aborigines, and his work has been published and cited in numerous scientific journals.

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*The Unravelling of Form.* Textile artwork by Elizabeth Day, using natural and synthetic fibers. Installation detail, mixed media. Displayed in the exhibition *Invisible Words / Invisible Worlds*, Heritage Courtyard Pavilion, Parramatta (Sydney, Australia), November 2017. Photograph © Claire Taylor. Reproduced courtesy of Elizabeth Day and Claire Taylor.

CLIMATE, CLOTHING,  
AND AGRICULTURE  
IN PREHISTORY

LINKING EVIDENCE, CAUSES,  
AND EFFECTS

IAN GILLIGAN

University of Sydney



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## WARNING

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are warned that this book may contain images of people who are now deceased.

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## PREFACE

For someone who has no interest in clothes at a personal level and virtually no knowledge of fashion, it is strange that I had to write a book about clothing. There are two reasons why this happened. First, my real motivation is trying to understand how humans came to be the most unusual species on this planet. A long time ago, in high school, I was reading the novel *Lord of the Flies* by William Golding when something struck me about that allegorical tale. The fate of the boys marooned on a tropical island during a nuclear holocaust rang true, but I was bothered by something that did not seem to make sense. If we are products of evolution, a tendency toward self-destruction is an unlikely outcome of our evolutionary inheritance. I think Golding, like many others, was inclined to put it down to a conflict between our civilized state and our animal nature. From our origin in the animal world we inherit a taste for aggression, held in check (but perhaps intensified) by the thin veneer of civilization. This made me wonder about that thin veneer: What was this thing called civilization, and where did it come from? The conventional answer – civilization is the end-product of our natural talents such as possessing big brains, language, and so on – seemed only to raise more questions, and contradictions. Then it occurred to me, in one of those revelatory moments when something obvious presents itself. The thin veneer was the very thing that covered the boys when they landed on the island, the actual thing that, in the tropical heat and without the controls of adult society, began to disintegrate as the civilized veneer disappeared and their suppressed hunting instincts resurfaced. So I decided on the spot that clothing was the missing link, and I started to wonder about why we invented clothes.

My revelation about clothing led me to the second reason for this book. It soon became apparent as I began researching the origin of clothing, nothing was really known about its origins, at least scientifically, or its possible repercussions – the existence of clothing was taken for granted. I could not find a single book on the subject. The origin of clothing lay in prehistory, which led me into anthropology and archaeology, where I found there was little factual information. However, I did discover there had been ice ages in the recent past, which seemed to offer a fairly obvious answer, especially given our unusual nakedness – which likewise was largely taken for granted, with its

origins shrouded in mystery. I began reading books on anthropology, prehistory, and human evolution, and I was lucky to start with one of those great academic books written for the layperson, an early edition of Brian Fagan's *Men of the Earth* (yes, the title has changed, but that goes to show how long ago it was). Among other things, I learned that virtually nothing was known about clothing in archaeology (and there was no real interest in the subject). I learned too that the advent of agriculture at the end of the last ice age was pivotal in humanity's rise to civilization. And I learned that sheep were the first animal species to be domesticated in the Near East, the world's first major agricultural center (things have changed somewhat since I read Fagan's book). And our first crops were grasses like wheat, which happen to be what sheep like to eat. Sheep produce wool, and so I started to wonder about whether clothing might have played a role in the transition to agriculture – but alas, those first domesticated sheep did not have a woolen fleece, so wool wasn't the reason. Anyway, to cut a long story short, that's how it came about that someone with no interest in clothing at all came to write a book – the first in a series – about why clothing is our most important invention.

In writing this book, I was torn between addressing an academic audience and wanting to make the text accessible to a wide audience, à la Brian Fagan. The solution was an unsatisfactory compromise, with the book written at two levels: the main text is written in an easy style, avoiding academic jargon as far as possible, but with detailed footnotes and referencing for those who may want to delve further. The other reason for doing this is that the subject matter cuts across quite a few scientific disciplines, and specialized terminologies would undermine even academic access to what is essentially an interdisciplinary endeavor. At least that is my excuse for all the generalizations and loose terminology; I hope the benefits outweigh the disadvantages.

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