BOOK REVIEWS


Reviewed by J. Peter White, University of Sydney, Australia

If I had been asked to predict the kind of synthesis Pat Kirch would write, it would have matched On the Road of the Winds pretty closely.

Scholarly? Very much so, with up-to-date (1999 included!) references into most Pacific nooks, a generous appreciation of major discoveries from New Guinea to Hawai‘i—and with a title and approach lineally descended from Peter Buck.

Readable? Undoubtedly, with persuasive accounts of areas and times, often enlivened by the personal reminiscences of a widely experienced researcher.

Holistic? Yes. Kirch believes strongly in the reconcilability of linguistics, human biology, ethnography, oral history, and archaeology in much of Pacific prehistory. The book is certainly primarily archaeological, but all disciplines come into play at various places.

Grandly synthetic? Indeed, emphasizing where he can aspects such as settlement patterns, economic systems and their intensification, palaeoenvironmental indications of land use and misuse (p. 11). The end result of this, as he admits, skews the book towards Polynesia, where much more research and theorizing has been done—and, I would argue, a shorter chronology makes some syntheses and problems considerably more straightforward.

Argumentative? Not quite as much as I had expected. Kirch often prefers to outline a problem but then back off with a comment about the need for more fieldwork (interestingly, not usually better thinking).

Overall then, one has to hand it to him. This book will undoubtedly become, as the cover says, “the essential reference,” a more readable and up-to-date addition to, and usually replacement of, much of Peter Bellwood’s Man’s Conquest of the Pacific (1978). He doesn’t cover quite the same ground of course, since he starts in Pleistocene Near Oceania rather than Southeast Asia; nor does he have the same concentration on artifacts, being of a more anthropological inclination. But this is magisterial stuff, with few factual errors. There are chapters on the history of archaeology (a bit Americo-centric), Pacific environments, 100 pages each on Melanesia and Polynesia, 40 on Micronesia, and a Polynesia-centric conclusion on “Big Structures and Large Processes.” Plenty of illustrations, maps, useful tables.

So what did I want that wasn’t there? Most importantly, I think, a stronger sense of problem. What are the exciting questions in Pacific archaeology and how might we go about researching them? My bent is considerably more towards Near Oceania than Kirch’s, but here are a couple of suggestions.

Kirch accepts that Austronesian languages were introduced from Southeast Asia, almost certainly with the Lapita culture complex. These languages are currently spoken in much of coastal Near Oceania, much more widely in fact than Lapita pottery is found.

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A holistic researcher might wonder what features gave these languages such an advantage that they should have spread in this way. Is it just because the speakers may have brought falciparum malaria with them (p. 100)? I doubt it: there is a major problem here for a holistic prehistorian.

In the exploration of Remote Oceania, people transported landscapes, including animals and plants, some inadvertent, some intentional. Not all made it to all islands and this was choice as much as chance. How did these choices affect the histories of the different islands?

There isn’t too much agency in this book, but such questions could have been looked at within the framework that Kirch has set himself.

On a larger scale it could be argued that Kirch’s Polynesian inclination itself makes the book a bit more of a statement about the past than the future of Pacific archaeology. There certainly are still problems in Remote Oceania, perhaps the most important being whether the various expressions of complexity are all simply the result of population growth (p. 311), environmental differences, and historically accidental trajectories, as he is inclined to believe. But a different and more open set of research fields lie in Near Oceania. Some examples:

What were tropical Pleistocene environments like and how did humans live in them? Not much is known about the effects of climate change in the lowland tropics: were the inhabitants of Yombon or Pamwak really living in an environment similar to today’s? Were they just hunter-gatherers in a tropical rainforest?

What was the nature of plant exploitation in highlands and lowlands over the last 30,000 years? How do we access this (residues, use-wear, phytoliths, land use?) and what contribution does this study make to general discussions about agricultural development in the tropics, likely to be a sharply contrasting history to the standard account?

What was the nature of the obsidian distribution systems in the first 20,000 years and how was this material used? Was it simply sharp stuff? Was any of it valuable, and what would this tell us about societies of the time?

What were Near Oceania’s links with Southeast Asian islands, hinted at by the Manus bronze, Wanigela pots, and glass beads in the Gulf of Papua, but only just starting to be explored (Swadling 1996)? How does this contribute to understanding the role of external influences on Pacific societies?

I suppose this sounds as if I wish that Kirch had written a different book. That’s partly true: I think he misses out on the chance to show how Pacific archaeology can make a contribution not just to the study of human impacts on “native lands” and how population growth leads to variant forms of stratified society but to a wider range of problems.

Make no mistake, Kirch has done a great job. But the future cannot just be more of the same.

REFERENCES

BELLWOOD, P.

SWADLING, P.


Reviewed by William A. Longacre, University of Arizona, Tucson

Laura Junker has provided us with a most comprehensive overview of the emergence of complex sociopolitical systems in the prehistoric and ethnohistoric Philippines.
Beyond that, she puts these polities into comparative perspective by looking at similar developments elsewhere in Southeast Asia. Her focus is on the emergence of complex systems increasingly engaged in long-distance maritime trade with China and other Asian states along the coasts of a number of the Philippine islands.

The book, a substantial revision of her 1990 doctoral dissertation at the University of Michigan, offers the most comprehensive examination of late Filipino prehistory and earliest history, drawing on an exhaustive examination of written documents. In addition, she uses extensive information from archaeological fieldwork, including her own extensive excavations in Negros Oriental in the Visayan region. She concludes that it is the participation in luxury good trade, especially for Chinese porcelain ceramics, in tandem with other developments in the political economy of the region that stimulates the emergence of complex polities in the prehistoric Philippines.

The book is divided into four parts. The first part reviews the general theory of the relationship between long-distance trade and the development of complex polities. She also reviews the nature of the historical and archaeological sources for exploring such developments in Southeast Asia. The second part examines the general theoretical background for the development of ranking and stratification of complex polities that are clearly present in the Philippines by the period of initial Spanish contact in the mid sixteenth century.

The third part focuses on the importance of foreign trade and the social changes that ensue during the period from about 1000 B.C. until the time of Spanish contact nearly three millennia later. She presents a model of polities emerging in coastal locations on rivers, with smaller settlements upstream. A complex arrangement of exchange between the lowland, coastal villages, and communities farther upstream in the more upland regions brought forest products and other resources down in exchange for prestige goods or even as tribute.

The development of craft specialization is also explored in the third part. She explores the link between increasing socio-political complexity and the rise of specialized modes of craft production. In very complex systems, attached specialists often work for political elites and are relatively easy to spot archaeologically. But in less complex systems, the beginnings of full-time crafts specialization are often more difficult to identify in the archaeological record. She draws on recent ethnoarchaeological work that suggests that increasing standardization of the product corresponds with the beginnings of craft specialization.

The development and maintenance of alliances among political elites through the exchange of high-status goods is reviewed using ethnohistoric and archaeological examples. She notes an increase in such complex systems in the first millennium of the Christian era and suggests that this resulted in increased demand for Chinese ceramics and other valuable trade goods at that time. She also documents the appearance of competitive feasting during this period as leaders vied for more followers to accrue more power. She details the evidence, both historic and archaeological, for an increase in warfare and raiding at that time. Among the important booty taken in the raids were slaves for work and for sacrifice.

The fourth part consists of one relatively short chapter summarizing this extraordinary presentation of fact and theory. It is without question the most substantial excursion into the historic and prehistoric records for Southeastern Asia generally and the Philippines in particular that I have seen. As such, it is an extremely useful compendium that will be of interest and help to historians, anthropologists, and archaeologists for some time to come.

Of course in a work of such breadth and scope with such rich scholarship, there will be specialists who will find fault with details from their specialized areas of study. I cannot resist being among the first to present an example of this sort of "picky" comment! In reviewing the ethnographic literature of the Philippines, she notes in numerous places the nature of the highland groups in central Luzon as examples of groups that interacted with more complex
societies in the lowlands. She suggests that these highland societies might well be more complex than generally believed. She even suggests that groups like the Kalinga may well be ranked societies (p. 320). While it is true there are differences in wealth among Kalinga families, it is not true that there are inherited ranks that differentiate them from one another. Indeed, it is not unusual for the fortunes of a family to change abruptly from great wealth to poverty in only a single generation. Leadership is not in the hands of a single individual but rather in the council of Pangat, men who traditionally demonstrated great skill in warfare as well as high intelligence as illustrated in their abilities in making public speeches. These high statuses are classic examples of achieved positions and not ascribed ones among the Kalinga.

She has quite deliberately cast her entire argument in the theoretical realm of cultural evolution. Beyond that, she has focused on the evolutionary stage called the chiefdom as classically defined by Service and others in the 1960s. Since then, of course, there have been great strides forward in better understanding the emergence of such complex forms of society. But seeing “chiefdoms” as a “… structural distinct precursor to state-level societies” (p. 65) will cause some anthropological archaeologists discomfort. In her introductory comments about these theoretical concerns, it is clear that she favors the cultural evolutionary paradigm and the notion of “chiefdoms” and uses these notions throughout her book (pp. 65–68).

Such minor discomfiture should evaporate upon seeing the superb scholarship displayed in this remarkable contribution. The use of her own archaeological data recovered over so many years as a result of her participation in the Bais Archaeological Project and her later direction of the Tanjay Archaeological Project in Negros Oriental reveals the great contribution to a better understanding of Philippine prehistory from her own efforts. Indeed, it is clear that her own work and that of only a few colleagues have produced the data essential to the kinds of inferences and arguments she presents in this stimulating book. I would hope her book stimulates others to undertake the kind of careful, well-designed, long-term fieldwork that typifies her own.


Reviewed by HARRY ALLEN, University of Auckland, New Zealand

The Riches of Ancient Australia closely follows the text of the 1990 edition with only minor changes. This is appropriate for the data chapters and for Chapter 1, “Do the Right Thing,” but is less acceptable for Chapters 2 and 3. Chapter 2 is an introduction to Australian prehistory, which misses the last decade, a period of significant discovery in Australian archaeology. This is also largely the case with Chapter 3, “Introduction to Australian Rock Art.” While it is noted that the cation-ratio dating of rock engravings has been discredited, this chapter largely misses Alan Watchman’s painstaking breakthroughs in the dating of Australian rock paintings. On Figure 2.3 (p. 18), New Guinea is shown as a part of Greater Australia. However, in Table 2.1 (p. 17), aspects of New Guinean prehistory prior to 7,000 B.P. are separated from those of Australia and are listed “In rest of world” rather than with Australia. It should be made clear that The Riches of Ancient Australia are limited to those which relate to the boundaries of the current nation state, excluding the Torres Strait Islands.
Western Australia (Chapters 4, 5, 6, and 7) is a state about which I know little. The guide to its sites and places of interest is well written, informative, and interesting. Advice on when private visitation is impossible, through remoteness, difficult terrain, or Aboriginal sensitivities is invaluable. As the author notes, in such situations, the visitor is advised to join a tour group. Also invaluable are the estimates of time to allow a complete round trip, advice that can save a life in the Australian outback. Two descriptions are new to this edition, Kunnunurra region cave paintings and Lake Argyle area (p. 79). An excellent addition to this edition is that telephone numbers have been updated or added.

Chapter 8 deals with the “Top End of the Northern Territory.” The first section of this chapter discusses archaeological discoveries made in Western Arnhem Land, early dates, early art, early ground-edge axes, sequences of changes in artifact and art styles, and describes locations associated with these. A second section labeled “Kakadu National Park” begins on page 92. Here are noted places that Parks Australia, the authority which manages Kakadu National Park, has prepared for year-round visitation. There is some overlap and repetition between the two sections. Climatic conditions make many of the sites unvisit-able during the wet season, some roads and sites are permanently closed, while others require permission from park and Aboriginal authorities. There is no mention that a major township, Jabiru, and the Ranger mine and uranium processing plant are located within the park boundary. The Warradjan Aboriginal Cultural Center near Yellow Water, which presents an Aboriginal-oriented view of the area and its history, is worth a mention and a visit.

I have some problems with the details of Chapter 8 where a number of points of debate are skirted over. Are the Kakadu sand sheets definitely the product of human-firing activity? Do the thermoluminescence dates represent Australia’s “oldest firmly dated traces of human presence”? Did the rising of the sea at the end of the “ice age” (hardly an appropriate term for tropical Australia) have a profound effect on Aboriginal culture? Did the post-glacial rise in sea level lead to the birth of the Rainbow Snake traditions? Birndu is no longer an accepted name for Ngarradj Warde Djokkeng. The rest of Chapter 8 reflects the author’s long knowledge of the western part of the Top End and does contain the type of detail requested above for Kakadu. The section on Jiminum (p. 108), including the revised dates for occupation, is an addition to the 1990 edition.

Queensland receives two chapters (9 and 10). Queensland’s archaeological, palaeontological, and art sites are spectacular and varied. Many are in national parks or reserves and are accessible to the visitor. Where permission is required to visit, details are provided. This part of the guide makes good armchair reading while at the same time made me feel that a four-wheel drive adventure holiday in North Queensland might be a very good idea. The section on the Chalawong engraving site, Gatton region (p. 150), is new to this edition.

The chapters on Central Australia, South Australia: The North (Chapters 11 and 12) are interesting but short. The author clearly shows the wealth of archaeological, art, and natural historical sites that might be visited using Alice Springs as a base. Apart from a few well-known places such as Uluru, however, the central parts of both these states remain undeveloped from a tourism point of view. The growth of art galleries at Aboriginal townships, such as Yuendumu, might have been worth a mention. Visitors interested in Aboriginal rock art would also be interested in the contemporary expression of Aboriginal art.

Southeastern Australia (South Australia, Victoria, New South Wales, and the Australian Capital territory) are discussed in seven separate sections (Chapters 13 to 19). This is the part of Australia with the largest, most urbanized population, the region which was settled first by European colonists. The area has a large number of historic and scenic reserves and national parks which are easily accessible. It is also an area where there has been the greatest destruction of Aboriginal places. What survives is
interesting but does not match either the range, number, or sheer beauty of Aboriginal places in central and northern Australia. My own preferences are for Mungo and Mutawinji national parks, now both in joint management with Aboriginal communities. Only a brief mention, and no location, is given for Kow Swamp in Victoria, a burial complex that the author notes is "the largest single population from the Pleistocene excavated in one locality anywhere in the world, and is of supreme significance in the global study of human physical development" (p. 20). It is also a skeletal collection which generated a most divisive split between Aborigines and Victorian politicians on the one side and archaeologists on the other, culminating in the reburial of the collection in an unknown locality. I would have thought such a human drama would find a place in The Riches of Ancient Australia and would be of interest to visitors.

Tasmania is an interesting place, one that stands in contrast, on its western side at least, with much of the mainland. It is wet, cold, and covered with temperate rainforest and alpine heaths. It is an understatement when the author describes Kutakina Cave in Tasmania's southwest as "not easy to reach" (p. 327) and then goes on to discuss rafting up or down the Franklin River or undertaking a three-day trek, recommended for very experienced bush walkers only! The list of Tasmanian places is small but they are spectacular. Of the Tasmanians, the author notes (p. 326) "That the people who experienced the longest isolation should have the world's simplest material culture is fascinating." However, claims for the uniqueness of Tasmania's Aboriginal inhabitants have been overdone. What does the term "isolated" mean for a hunting and gathering society at 35,000 or even 7000 B.P.? Counting items of material culture went out with criticisms of the Tylorian concept of culture. A final note on Tasmania. Sadly, a part of the Sundown Point rock engravings were vandalized and stolen in 1998.

It is a tribute to the quality and usefulness of this book that it is now in its third edition and both the author and University of Queensland Press are to be congratulated. It is a good guide and, notwithstanding any fault-finding on my part, an interesting and worthwhile read. I use it when traveling in Australia and I know a number of professional archaeologists who do likewise. The reproduction of photographs and figures is much improved in the new edition. As the author notes in her preface, the revisions for this edition consist mostly of the greatly expanded list of contacts, museums, visitors centers, and other opportunities to experience indigenous culture. Except for this, and a few other additions noted above, it is little changed from the earlier edition.


Reviewed by C. Melvin Aikens, University of Oregon

In this book Hudson undertakes to specify the origin of Japanese ethnicity. In his formulation, it is placed in a major immigration of rice-farming people from adjacent Korea about 300–200 B.C. The Jomon hunter-gatherers who had occupied the islands for thousands of years before were not Japanese, but rather Ainu ancestors who
were mostly assimilated (except in the north) by Korean immigrants who themselves became the first Japanese. The title of the book is a double entendre; at once a reflection on the importance of historical and archaeological remains to the modern Japanese in contemplating their origins, and a reflection of Hudson’s belief that his analysis leaves in ruins the popular Japanese concept of themselves as a unique people shaped by a residence in their islands that stretches back unbroken to the time of the Jomon culture (first marked by the appearance of pottery 12,000–13,000 years ago).

It is in essence an analysis that has long been propounded by non-Japanese students of Japanese culture. Its intellectual origins go back to the writings of von Baelz Aston and other European and American visitors who came to Japan in the decades after the Meiji Restoration of 1868, and it remains current today in both scholarly and popular Western versions of Japanese history. One must grant that any idea so persistent has to be underpinned by some very substantial considerations, and indeed it is. On the other hand, the widespread Japanese idea that their identity continues back in time well beyond Yayoi period immigrations also has a substantial foundation. Many Western writers, among whom Hudson must be numbered, have enjoyed the conceit that their view is the more dispassionate (and correct) one, while the popular Japanese view can be dismissed as a nationalistic illusion deliberately fostered by clever manipulation of the historical data.

The evidence that rice and other important cultural elements entered Japan from Korea is overwhelming, as Hudson’s account (informed by a huge archaeological literature) makes clear. When this began to happen is less clear, though it was surely at least some centuries before the 200–300 B.C. date usually given for it on mainly historical rather than archaeological grounds.

That genes from continental populations are massively present in the modern Japanese population—which, however, still embodies major genetic heritage that is ancient in the islands—is also a surety. It is important to stress, however, that the genetic evidence which shows such a high degree of linkage between Japanese and continental populations is mainly derived from modern populations, not archaeological ones, on both sides of the water. Hudson’s chapter, “Biological Anthropology and the Dual Structure Hypothesis,” gives a good update of the diverse evidence from skeletal and genetic studies, and a good introduction to the fascinating literature bearing on this issue.

How the manifestly substantial presence of continental genes in the Japanese islands relates to a hypothesized importation of Japanese ethnicity from Korea during the Yayoi period is thus not entirely clear. Skeletal data in western Japan generally are notably scarce, and although both Jomon and Yayoi skeletons of distinctive morphology are known there, they are too few and their dating too limited to convincingly demonstrate that the continental genes now so prevalent in the modern Japanese population only began flowing into Japan during the Yayoi period. It is also well known that significant continental gene flow continued into later times. This is documented both archaeologically and by written accounts, as Japanese lords imported entire villages of Korean artisans into the Osaka-Kyoto-Nara region in early historical times. In sum although Hudson uses the biological evidence to argue an influx of ethnic Japanese people at the beginning of the Yayoi period, continental gene flow certainly is not definitively circumscribed to that brief interval by the currently available evidence. It is quite possible that gene flow from Korea is ancient in western Japan, as well as recent, and it is also widely acknowledged that a population boom within western Japan, consequent upon the new agricultural economy, must have been a major factor in spreading Yayoi culture across the country.

Certainly, Hudson fully recognizes that genes do not translate to ethnicity, and that biological evidence alone can not establish the arrival of a new ethnic identity in Japan. The Japanese language is of course a key point in this regard, and Hudson introduces it in Chapter 4, “The Linguistic
Archaeology of the Japanese Islands." The chapter gives a good overview of the main classificatory and culture-historical issues relating to the Japanese language, and lays out Hudson's view of how Japanese, introduced from Korea at the beginning of the Yayoi period, replaced the language previously spoken there. He endorses the solid linguistic evidence that Japanese and Korean are related languages, both members of a Northeast Asian family that also includes Manchu and Tungusic. Hudson also acknowledges the sentiment among linguists that modern Korean and modern Japanese are so different they could scarcely have diverged so far from a shared mother tongue in only 2,000 years. He “solves” this problem by suggesting that Japanese may be derived from an Old Koguryo language spoken in northern Korea and Manchuria, which may have been closer to Old Japanese than was the language of Silla in south Korea, from which modern Korean is most directly derivable. The weakness of this tortuous and speculative proposal is manifest. Surely the theory offered years ago by distinguished linguist Roy Andrew Miller, that the language ancestral to modern Japanese crossed between Korea and Kyushu during Early Jomon times, and became widespread in Japan during the later population boom of Yayoi agriculturists, offers a better accounting of the current gulf between Korean and Japanese.

Paradoxically, Hudson begins and ends his book by speaking of ethnicity as “ever in the process of becoming,” yet he is also very clear in saying that the ethnic Japanese arrived in the islands during Yayoi times and replaced their predecessors (probably Ainu ancestors) throughout most of Japan during that brief period of a few hundred years. Moreover, he explicitly challenges the notion that Jomon economic pursuits such as fishing were carried over into the post-Jomon Japanese identity. A far longer period of “becoming,” which admitted of meaningful contributions from the pre-Yayoi occupants of the archipelago, would be much more plausible in terms of available archaeological, physical, and linguistic evidence, and much more in keeping with the Japanese view of their historical origins.

Despite the critical tone taken in this review, I recommend Hudson's *Ruins of Identity* as a useful and valuable work. Although I do not believe he has found “the answer” to the question of Japanese ethnic origins, he addresses many important issues, and demonstrates a wide-ranging scholarship in doing so. Western students of Japanese prehistory in particular will gain many leads and insights from his impressive and up-to-date awareness of ongoing research, and his extensive bibliography. His ideas about the Japanese states' historical role in eliciting Ainu ethnicity, not touched on in this necessarily brief review, are also thought provoking.


*Reviewed by Mark Lycett, University of Chicago*

This monograph, a revision of Cooper's 1983 Ph.D. thesis at Deccan College, includes two distinct but interrelated studies of the historical economy of Chitrakot, Bastar District, Madhya Pradesh. The first of these is a report of six field seasons of archaeological survey, detailed surface documentation, and test excavation on the flood plain of the Indravati River. The second is a brief but detailed ethnographic
study of subsistence technology among Kuruk Gond populations currently occupying this region. Each of these studies is admirable in its own right; however, like any divided venture, the coherence of Cooper's work depends on the sometimes tenuous links between these two research domains. Cooper suggests that the structure of aquatic resources in her study area influenced human settlement and technological organization just as strongly and in much the same way in the terminal Pleistocene and early Holocene as they do today. Whether or not such a strong claim of historical stability can be sustained, this monograph is a genuine contribution to both prehistory and ethnography in the service of archaeology.

The principal goals of this study were to characterize the content and spatial structure of these assemblages and examine their relationship to environmental variables in relation to ethnographic models of aquatic resource exploitation. Cooper begins with an introduction to the study region, a 107-sq-km area around Chitrakot Falls on the Indravati River. Forty-nine sites consisting entirely of microlithic tools and debitage were located in twelve months of archaeological survey. Like most Mesolithic sites in peninsular India, these scatters are relatively shallow and exhibit a wide range of variation in areal extent and density. Nine of these sites were chosen for more detailed documentation including mapping and systematic collection of up to 30 percent of the surface sample of chipped stone. In addition to the morphological and functional analyses of these materials, these samples formed the basis of an intrasite spatial analysis of artifact clustering.

Chapter 4 contains a detailed description of the lithic industry. A number of important observations regarding raw material use, blade manufacture, and production of formal tools arise from this work. Clearly, the relationship among procurement, manufacture, use, and discard of this technology is a complex one, and one that is only partially represented in any one sample. The results of these analyses are presented clearly and in quantitative terms, allowing the reader to evaluate the evidence behind the author's inferences.

Chapter 5 builds on the discussion of assemblage content to discuss the spatial structure of the nine sampled sites. The analysis focuses on associations of clustered artifact types through spatial mapping of correlation matrices. Although begun under the optimistic premise that "activity areas" may have survived centuries of displacement, erosion, and reoccupation, Cooper's interpretation of spatial patterning is unflinchingly pessimistic. She concludes, for example, that spatial patterns are in large part due to erosional processes. A lack of three-dimensional data hinders the precision of this conclusion; however, Cooper's argument is persuasive.

In the subsequent chapter, a summary and interpretation of the archaeological research, Cooper moves beyond this pessimism to make a number of important suggestions for advancing prehistoric research on the subcontinent. These include the need for detailed study of formation processes and the development of appropriate ethnographic models of technology and settlement. More important, perhaps, is Cooper's recognition of the need to develop archaeological methods for the interpretation of surficial contexts and her shift in focus from sites as exemplars of functional categories to regional archaeological records as indicators of occupational history. If the activity areas of an ethnographic time frame are elusive, the long-term history of local land-use patterns may be more accessible archaeologically.

It is at this point that the monograph moves from a discussion of archaeological research to an ethnographic profile of the economy of local fishing communities. There is a wealth of detail, particularly regarding procurement of aquatic resources, in this chapter and the related appendix. Cooper is well aware that these populations are not primitive isolates living as untransformed foragers at the fringes of more complex political economies. Despite historic transformations of economy, settlement, and society, much can be learned from the way in which these contemporary
foragers adapt to their social and physical environments. Cooper demonstrates how seasonal variation in hydrological regimens strongly influences the structure of both terrestrial and aquatic resources in her study area. This variation, in turn, influences mobility and settlement systems. If essentially identical rainfall conditions occurred in the Mesolithic, did similar adaptive strategies develop to address them? This question is difficult to answer with the available data. While the regional spatial distribution of archaeological sites is not inconsistent with the ethnographic model, studies of surface scatters are unlikely to provide a detailed understanding of an economy based on fishing. The integration of the ethnographic model with the archaeological data, then, awaits further development.

In general, this is a strong contribution to the Mesolithic prehistory of Central India. As a study it is well organized, closely argued, and thoughtful. The detailed presentations of data and analytical technique employed in the study are particularly welcome. If the results raise more issues than they resolve, they nonetheless point in important directions for future research efforts. Like other work from the same publisher, the volume is well produced and professionally edited. South Asianists with an interest in the late Pleistocene and early Holocene should find this work a welcome addition to their libraries.


This book is the most recent publication of a long-term project investigating prehistoric habitation on the eastern margins of the Gulf of Siam. Research to date has included settlement survey, excavation, and analysis of the Neolithic habitation and mortuary site of Khok Phanom Di, dating 2000–1500 B.C., and three seasons of excavation and analysis of materials from Nong Nor (see Higham and Bannanurag 1990, 1991; Higham and Thosarat 1993 for references). Nong Nor, a multicomponent site situated in a marginal environment for cultivation, was excavated in order to provide a larger framework within which to interpret the social organization, settlement system, and subsistence regimen at Khok Phanom Di.

Nong Nor comprises a habitation component dating c. 2450 B.C. and a mortuary component dating 1100–700 B.C. Chronologically, the occupation of Khok Phanom Di occurs between the two Nong Nor components; thus, the two sites were not part of the same settlement system. Nonetheless, we are fortunate that the excavators persisted in the campaign at Nong Nor, for this is a tremendously important, well-excavated site, providing detailed data for a third millennium B.C. coastal adaptation not yet reported for this part of the Southeast Asian mainland, and provides a large sample of well-excavated Bronze Age burials as well.

Fourteen authors contributed analytical chapters to this compendium and editors C.F.W. Higham and R. Thosarat wrote contextualizing introductions, providing background and overviews of the research. The chapters can be roughly divided into three sections: environmental overview, analysis of habitation, and analysis of mortuary
activity. Authors T.F.G. Higham, A. Hogg, W. E. Boyd, and C. Pailles provide a good chronological and environmental overview. Boyd's contribution, in particular, provides a well-articulated reconstruction of the geomorphology of the region based on stratigraphic sampling.

The majority of the analyses of materials from the early occupation layer was carried out by D.J.W. O'Reilly as part of his master's thesis. Lithics, bone tools and bone tool debris, potting tools, and a large corpus of ceramic fragments were excavated. C.F.W. Higham, R. E. Fordyce, and G. M. Mason carried out analysis of faunal remains. Faunal remains consisted of both terrestrial and marine vertebrates, as well as a large array of shellfish and crab remains, but dogs and pigs were absent. The shellfish, crabs, fish, crocodiles, turtles, rays, sharks, and cetaceans identified demonstrate that a wide variety of marine environments were utilized, ranging from estuarine to off-shore habitats. No plant remains or human remains were recovered. The authors argue that Nong Nor was occupied c. 2500 B.C. for a short period of time (approximately six months) by a group of people who hunted both marine and terrestrial animals and were engaged in ceramic production. Estimates of occupation length are based on the amount of pottery found on the site.

The Nong Nor excavations provided a unique opportunity to examine artifact patterning in an open-air foraging site on coastal mainland Southeast Asia. The almost mutually exclusive distribution of worked and nonworked bone, and the clustering of similar types of ceramic anvils were particularly intriguing. It is unfortunate, however, that there is little discussion of the complex site stratigraphy. Profiles show a red layer with charcoal and pottery both over- and underlain by layers of shellfish remains, extending across the site. In the absence of information about site stratigraphy, the shifting loci of several classes of artifacts in each stratigraphic layer suggest that the same activities took place in slightly different areas in succeeding occupations of the site, although the authors argue that there was only a single occupation. The figures accompanying O'Reilly's spatial analysis do not do justice to the importance of the data or to the conclusions. The crowded figures (four to a page) are too small, and do not include hearth locations. The symbol for each object is the same size as the 1 m² grid. This size may have been deliberately chosen to reflect the provenance given in the text descriptions, to the nearest square meter, but smaller symbols on a larger map would have allowed for greater appreciation of the artifactual patterns.

These large and carefully documented data classes can accommodate a number of analytical perspectives. The authors chose to focus on cultural continuity between Nong Nor and the later Khok Phanom Di as a means to examine propositions about the establishment of Austroasiatic languages and rice agriculture in Southeast Asia. They find cultural continuity in several classes of utilitarian items, including ceramic vessel shape, grinding stones, fishhooks, and adzes. In addressing these larger questions of Southeast Asian settlement and language, however, several unique aspects of the Nong Nor occupation may have been minimized. I was intrigued by the presence of remains of species from open-water environments in the settlement deposits. While it is possible that several of the species of large shark and cetaceans represent scavenging events, the overall impression is that off-shore fishing was practiced, implying the use of substantial sea craft and multiperson crews. The absence of pig and dog bones also suggests that the subsistence economy was oriented towards maritime resources. On the other hand, if Nong Nor was inhabited by foragers, why was there such a heavy investment in ceramic production? O'Reilly estimates that 1,800 pots were made at the site. The subsistence economy of the Nong Nor habitation—an apparent marine focus combined with specialized production—deserves closer scrutiny.

The second component of Nong Nor consists of a Bronze Age cemetery. The 180 primary inhumations had been cut
through the shellfish midden of the first occupation. There is no evidence for habitation in the immediate vicinity of the burials. Funerary objects included ceramic vessels, stone, shell, bronze and tin jewelry, and animal remains, primarily pigs’ feet and dogs’ skulls. These are described by J. Debreceny (ceramics), N. G. Chang and A. Reay (ornaments), and C.F.W. Higham (animal bones). Unlike the artifact classes from the habitational component, these were not compared to mortuary assemblages from other sites of similar age in Southeast Asia.

The human remains were analyzed by N. G. Tayles, K. Domett, and V. Hunt. Although the preservation was poor, the Bronze Age Nong Nor population appears to have been surprisingly healthy, with few broken bones or other signs of trauma. Post-burial distortion precluded cranial measurements, but mandibular and post-crania element measurements were taken. Age, sex, and health assessments were made for each individual. These data were integrated with the burial descriptions by C.F.W. Higham and R. Thosarat. The burial catalog of the Bronze Age cemetery is splendid, and appears to be thorough and accurate. Most of them are accorded a full-page map, and often photographs, and each map is accompanied by a burial description and a list of funerary inclusions.

Statistical analysis of the burials was carried out by C.F.W. Higham, J. Debreceny, and B.F.W. Manly. They suggest that at least two groups were present, possibly representing extended families or lineages, and that the eastern group is later in time than the western group. The restricted distribution of certain ceramic types, particularly Type 10, which, we are told, occurs only in the eastern section, suggested to the authors that the sections were separated in time. Table 12, however, lists two burials in the western section with Type 10 pots.

Principal components analysis of complete burials failed to reveal patterns of objects associated with particular ages or sexes. No differences between eastern and western burial sections were identified in terms of particular classes of objects found exclusively with spatially segregated groups. The eastern group of burials, however, contained all of the exotic stone artifacts (excluding marble). While not mentioned in the authors’ discussion, seven out of the eight occurrences of tin, and two-thirds of all of the bronze were found in the eastern part of the cemetery. If the east and west groups were contemporary, questions of status differences resulting in unequal access to exotic goods are relevant. Ceramic seriation of the mortuary assemblage might assist in resolving questions of chronology. Careful excavating and reporting makes these data available for other types of analyses, as sophistication in the interpretation of mortuary data continues to grow.

This volume is an excellent addition to the literature on the archaeology of Southeast Asia. It presents an impressive amount of raw data that, with a little effort on the part of the reader, are readily accessible. These data can be used to address a range of research issues, including organization of tropical maritime foraging economies, specialized production, and mortuary analysis. The Excavation of Nong Nor will be of interest to the archaeologist interested in foraging economies or mortuary analysis as well as to the Southeast Asian specialist.

REFERENCES


The Writing System is the first of a projected four volumes in Possehl's *Indus Age* series. The main purpose of the volume is to "review the corpus of glyptic material and attempt to assess the present state of knowledge of the script" (p. vii). The effort is justified on the grounds that "there is nowhere one can turn for an in-depth overview on the Indus writing system" (p. 1), and that "[f]or the most part the corpus of writing on the Indus script emerges as individual works with a distinct bias, vying for a particular decipherment or perspective on the script" (p. 2). Possehl therefore presents this volume as the first comprehensive and objective review of the subject.

Possehl approaches the subject through a general overview (Chapters 1 through 4) of the Indus script and its archaeological context, followed by the longest and most important chapter, "Decipherments and Other Research on the Indus Script," and a brief concluding chapter on "The State of Research on the Indus Script." In Chapter 5, he summarizes and evaluates thirty-five published claims or proposed approaches to decipherment of the Indus script, which is widely agreed to be the most important remaining problem in the decipherment of ancient scripts worldwide. Possehl's evaluations are generally sensible, realistic, and as tactful as is possible. Although Possehl does not say so in so many words, his presentation and evaluations confirm that decipherment efforts to date can be divided into the serious or at least well informed, and the rank amateur or crackpot. Among the former, the efforts of G. H. Hunter, the Russian team of Yu. V. Knozorov et al., the Finnish team of A. Parpola et al., I. Mahadevan, and W. Fairservis receive deserved, if qualified praise from Possehl. Of most of the others, the less said the better, and indeed, one wonders whether a review of many of these is even worth the effort. Still, some of this makes interesting reading, if only by way of cautionary tales, as in Possehl's summary (pp. 90-100) of the theories of a connection between Indus script and the *rongorongo* of Rapanui (Easter Island), in which some highly reputed scholars got involved to their discredit.

However, I found Possehl's agnostic attitude towards some proposed decipherments to be excessively cautious. It is theoretically true that "there is the logical possibility that one of them is correct, we just cannot prove it!" (p. 1) or that "one of them might be right, but how will we know for sure?" (p. 151), but as a practical matter, it is obvious enough that none of them is correct. If they were, they would have led us to some consensus of understanding at least about the rudiments of the script and its language, and this, as Possehl's summary in Chapter 6 shows, has not happened. Here he summarizes the points on which there is some general agreement (pp. 164-165), and they are few indeed and mostly of a very general nature, such as "[t]he script is to be read from right to left." He also offers some methodological suggestions for future attempts at decipherment, for example, "a detailed study of individual signs" and emphasizes the importance of "contextualization of the script," by which he means that "efforts should not be directed at the script as a general, undifferentiated writing system, but as one delivering messages within a context of different media" (p. 166). This is all reasonable, but there is little if anything new in it, and all in all one ends, as usual, with a sense of frustration and discouragement with this intractable problem.

Decrying the lack of "team spirit" in the efforts to date, Possehl concludes that
"[s]ince there is little basic research on the script and so little sharing of programmatic visions, it is scarcely a wonder that the writing system has not yet been understood" (p. 168). But this is overly optimistic; it is not the lack of cooperation that has prevented decipherment, but rather the nature of the problem itself, involving an unknown script and an (as yet) unknown language, insufficient materials, and a total absence of bilingual or birect script texts. Experience has taught us that decipherment problems of this type cannot be solved without some point of entry into the system, such as the identification of proper names known from other sources of information, and there is little reason to be optimistic about prospects for a breakthrough in the present state of knowledge. This is not meant to paint a totally black picture, however; given the ongoing excavations at Harappa and other Indus sites, there is a reasonable possibility of discovery of new documents or other types of materials that may eventually provide a breakthrough. But we will have to be lucky.

The comments above are perhaps matters of difference of general outlook rather than substance. But there are also more serious problems in this book that cannot be glossed over. From the point of view of a linguist, philologist, or epigraphist (which is that of this reviewer), it leaves a great deal to be desired. The book is linguistically naive and ill-informed. For example, the description of the Rgveda on page 65 is hopelessly confused: we are told that "[t]he language of the Vedas is Sanskrit," that "their creators would have been horrified by the thought that they were put into writing," and that "[t]he hymns of the Rgveda are complex and extensive, 191 verses." In fact the Rgveda is in the Vedic (or Vedic Sanskrit) language, its creators had no notion of writing and thus could hardly have been horrified by it, and it had some 16,000 verses. The definitions in the glossary of linguistic and archaeological terms (pp. 232–234) are strangely garbled; for instance, "genitive" is defined as "[a] grammatical case in linguistics. The genitive case expresses a possessive connection or some other similarly 'close' association, e.g., 'the man's hat'," while "accusative" is "[t]he grammatical case that marks the direct object of verbs or the object of any of several pronouns [sic]."

Equally disturbing is an evident lack of understanding of basic concepts and history of writing systems. In the glossary, "phonographic" is defined as "[a] system of writing that uses more or less arbitrary symbols to represent morphemes." The comment on the Tamil-Brahmā script, that "the Indus script seems to be preserved best in what are today the principal Dravidian regions of the subcontinent" (p. 69) shows a total misunderstanding of the position of the Tamil-Brahmā inscriptions in the history of writing in India. In the discussion of the number of signs in the Indus script (p. 53), we read that the count of several hundred signs "strongly suggests that the writing system is based on syllables, or something akin to them, and is neither alphabetic or logographic." This leads to the conclusion that "the script is some form of syllabic writing." It is surprising not to find the term "logosyllabic" here (though it does come up elsewhere, e.g., p. 165), since a character count in the hundreds is clearly indicative of such a system; indeed, this is one of the few basic points that are nearly certain about the Indus script, and is of the most fundamental importance. Nor is it easy to imagine what "something akin to [syllables]" might be; the language here is characteristically vague.

The book as a whole is poorly written and edited. A passage of two sentences at the top of page 18 is repeated, with very slight changes in wording, as a separate paragraph later in the same page. Quintus Curtius becomes Quintus Curtis (pp. 70 and 219), and matres lectionis become matres lactionis (p. 141). The bibliography—a particularly important part of a survey of this type—is a mess, containing such garbled citations as Uchyonie Zapiskii Pedagogical Institut oj Stalingrad. Filolog (p. 175), Soviet Vostokovedeniye (p. 176), and Die Alteste Volerwnaderung und Die Proto-Indische Zivilisation: Ein Eersuch die Proto-Indische Inschriften von Mohenjo-daro (p. 192). Citations are
frequently incomplete, inaccurate, and inconsistent, and all in all the bibliography (and sometimes the rest of the book as well) reads like an unedited transcription of rough notes.

For all its flaws, *Indus Age: The Writing System* compiles a fair amount of information and gives a useful general summary of the state of the art with regard to the Indus script. Those seeking a more accurate and sophisticated treatment, especially from a linguistic point of view, however, would do best to look elsewhere, for instance at Asko Parpola's *Deciphering the Indus Script* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).


Reviewed by WILHELM SOLHEIM, University of the Philippines

Judith Heimann has presented in her book what I feel is a very accurate, well-written and enjoyable picture of Tom Harrisson. This is the first time this has been done for a man who was and will remain a very important person in the development of archaeology in Southeast Asia, even though he was neither a trained nor a good archaeologist. Among other things Tom was an egomaniac. One little indication of this happened, in the Sarawak Museum: when he came across the misspelling of his name using only one "s" you could hear him scream in anger from one end of the building to the other.

After a major argument with Harrisson I seem to have been one of the few archaeologists who was a friend of his, admired him, and at the same time recognized the "Offending Soul" that he was. I organized a special issue of *Asian Perspectives* (Vol. 20, 1977) in memory of Tom and included in it was a bibliography of his writings that we could find concerning Southeast Asian archaeology and related subjects (Solheim and Jensen 1977). We listed 27 different obituary and memorial articles on him, written by 19 different people (Solheim and Jensen 1977:19–20). "I feel that the one fairly critical article I have seen on Tom's work has been mine on his treatment of the Niah archaeology" (Solheim and Jensen 1977:iv). Besides *Asian Perspectives*, *The Journal of the Malaysian Branch Royal Asiatic Society* (50[1] 1977) and the *Borneo Research Bulletin* (8[2] 1976) also published memorial issues in memory of Tom. Many articles published since then have been quite disparaging.

Archaeology was only one rather small part of Tom's life and work. This part of his many research interests was primarily concerned with Sarawak, rather less with Borneo as a whole, but also concerned with Sarawak's and Borneo's place in Southeast Asia as a whole. Towards the end of his life he became interested in archaeological subjects concerning the Pacific. This was certainly in part because of his living virtually as a "native" in the Solomon Islands back in the 1930s. Of the 399 pages of text only a small portion of Part Five (Explorations and Excavations, pp. 288–303) and even smaller portions of Part Six (pp. 307–352) had to do with archaeology. These specific pages had little to do with archaeology, but rather were concerned with Tom and his involvement with the archaeology of Sarawak. Both Brunei and Sabah are mentioned, particularly in connection with his activities during the second World War and remarks on ethnographic subjects, but nothing about the archaeology he did there other than that he did a dig in each.
Tom was many different things to many different people, and to most of these he was not only offending but obnoxious. It amazes me how well Heimann is able to present this very offending side of Tom without turning the reader against him. A reader who knows very little about archaeology, or about archaeology in Southeast Asia in particular, would learn virtually nothing about archaeology (not a good source), and only a bit more specifically about archaeology in and on Borneo.

I feel that it is of importance for archaeologists and prehistorians who are interested in Southeast Asia to read this book primarily to develop an understanding of Tom as a person. Then it is possible, I believe, to realize that Tom has been important in the early development of Southeast Asian prehistoric archaeology and that for Borneo the specialist must know the work that Tom did in Sarawak, Brunei, and Sabah. For much of the world Tom put Borneo and Sarawak on the map. If only for that alone he should be remembered as having been of major importance for the many subjects he worked and published on, archaeology included.

I would like to end with a quote of a quote from Heimann (p. 397). This is from a Malay, Datuk Amar Abang Yusul Puteh, who had high office in Sarawak after Tom retired. "... As regards Tom's contribution to Sarawak, I would without hesitation see him as a big plus. Nobody else would have done what he did in his day, in a singlet and shorts and no shoes. He was a pioneer, without all the facilities and amenities that they have now...."