

# BOOK REVIEWS



*Prehistoric Long-Distance Interaction in Oceania: An Interdisciplinary Approach.* M. Weisler, ed. Monograph 21. Auckland: New Zealand Archaeological Association, 1997. NZ\$45.00

*Reviewed by IAN LILLEY, University of Queensland*

This book should bury the “primitive [Polynesian] isolate” myth once and for all. Marshall Weisler has gathered a group of archaeologists and earth scientists interested in long-distance interaction in the Pacific to demonstrate archaeologically that people in remote Oceania and especially Polynesia were in more contact than has been allowed historically in the anthropological/archaeological treatment of their societies. Despite recent skirmishes (Terrell et al. 1997 and comments following), Pacific scholars have for some time recognized that earlier views regarding the role of isolation in the adaptive divergence of remote Oceanic cultural systems were inadequate. The researchers marshaled by Weisler, however, have provided the weight of hard data needed to anchor evolving theory to a firm empirical base.

The book is well produced, with clear, two-column text, an abundance of informative figures and tables, and relatively few errors of typography. It is also reasonably priced, especially for those with strong currencies. An index would have been useful, as would short editorial links between the main sections of the volume. In my experience, particularly as a teacher, edited works such as this are frequently dipped into rather than read from cover to cover, and extra guidance about the content never goes unappreciated.

As regards that content, the book has 14 chapters, grouped into four parts: Introduction, Case Studies, Technical Papers, and Conclusion. The three papers in Part 1 include Weisler’s introductory comments, a piece by Roger Green and Patrick Kirch concerning explanatory models of the relationships between Polynesian exchange systems and their antecedents in the Lapita Cultural Complex, and a paper by Ben Finney on experimental voyaging, oral history, and long-distance interaction. Weisler does a thorough job of setting the scene ethnographically, archaeologically, and theoretically. He also outlines the volume contents in some detail. As noted above, though, this could have been augmented with short pieces linking the main parts of the work. Green and Kirch’s paper was of particular interest to me because of my focus on exchange in the origins of Lapita in northwest Melanesia. It provides critical contextual material for the chapters that follow. Finney’s chapter does a similar job from a different perspective, showing how traditional sailing technology could have shaped past patterns of interaction.

Part 2, Case Studies, includes the only paper focusing exclusively on non-Polynesian issues, in the form of Ayres, Goles, and Beardsley’s review of research on exchange in Micronesia and documentation of their exploratory sourcing studies of building stone from Nan Madol in Pohnpei. They remind us of the need in Micronesian re-

search to consider how variation in island types within Micronesia, as well as between intra- and extra-Micronesian linkages, can affect patterns and processes of exchange and our archaeological approaches to them.

The remaining five case studies take in Samoa, the Cooks, the Marquesas, and the Mangareva-Pitcairn group. To deal with the last two first, Rolett and three colleagues present the first ever archaeometric evidence for interisland contact in the Marquesas, and show how differences in the working qualities of imported and local stone are reflected in patterns of artifact manufacture. Weisler also reports a first in the archaeology of East Polynesia in his documentation of two-way transfer of goods between Mangareva and Pitcairn. This exchange formed part of a quite literal lifeline that allowed pre-European human occupation of the remote and depauperate Pitcairn group. Allen and Johnson discuss a similar phenomenon earlier in this section of the volume, in their consideration of basalt imports to Aitutaki in the southern Cooks. The other two papers, which open the section, could perhaps have fit just as well in the next part, Technical Papers. The first is Clark, Wright, and Herdrich's chapter, which summarizes the archaeological and geological evidence concerning Samoan fine-grained basalts, with a view to identifying what remains to be done to better understand the quarrying and inter-island movement of the material. The other chapter is Sheppard, Walter, and Parker's instructive study of basalt sources in the Cooks, which shows that importation from as far away as Samoa occurred alongside local quarrying, though it remains to be seen whether this was mainly in the early phases of the colonization of the Cooks or later.

The Technical Papers section contains just that: technical papers. It is not their technicality that distinguishes them from the very quantitative and data-rich papers in the preceding section, so much as their generality, or lack of focus on a particular geographic or archaeological case-in-point. Thus, Weisler and Sinton provide background on Polynesian basalt-sourcing studies in general and explain X-ray fluores-

cence, while Yoshihiko Sinoto and Sinton describe the University of Hawai'i's geochemical sourcing database and Parker and Sheppard outline the history and current procedures of the University of Auckland's geochemical sourcing program.

The fourth and final part of the book has only one chapter, an overview of exchange in Oceania by Timothy Earle. Like Green and Kirch's paper toward the beginning of the volume, this chapter particularly interests me because it links the themes and findings of the other papers to wider questions of exchange in Oceania generally. It goes beyond that, though, to compare and contrast Oceania-in-general with North America, against the backdrop of big theoretical questions concerning the variable natures of the sociopolitical and economic systems that can underpin long-distance exchange. Stimulating stuff! It is critical to remember, however, that we will not be able to address the sorts of high-level theoretical issues raised by Earle, or, indeed, adequately test explanatory models such as those proposed by Green and Kirch, until we do much more basic science of the kind brought together in the more technical middle sections of the book.

I congratulate Weisler on his achievement in bringing this volume together. It is timely, because it outlines the current state of play, indicates some important things that remain to be done, and draws our attention to the rigor of the approaches we must adopt to achieve solid progress. Important for what might otherwise have been a fairly dry read, the book's attention to wider contextual issues is also very encouraging in the way it promotes the explanatory potential of the results that will be achieved as work advances. Go get a copy!

## REFERENCE

- TERRELL, J., T. HUNT, AND C. GOSDEN  
1997 The dimensions of social life in the Pacific: Human diversity and the myth of the primitive isolate. *Current Anthropology* 38: 155-195.

*Indo-Pacific Prehistory: The Chiang Mai Papers*, Vols. 1–3. Vol. 1, ed. Peter Bellwood; Vol. 2, ed. Ian C. Glover and Peter Bellwood; Vol. 3, ed. Peter Bellwood and Dianne Tillotson. Bulletin of the Indo-Pacific Prehistory Association 14–16, Canberra: Australian National University, 1996.

*Reviewed by* LESLIE L. HARTZELL, *Bernice Pauahi Bishop Museum*

The Chiang Mai papers are presented as a three-volume (730+ pp.) compilation of the conference proceedings of the Fifteenth Congress of the Indo-Pacific Prehistory Association (IPPA), held in Chiang Mai, Thailand, 5–12 January 1994. One of the primary objectives of IPPA is to promote cooperation in the study of the prehistory of eastern Asia and the Pacific region. The Congress organizers included a broad range of research themes: Pleistocene and early Holocene studies in the Indo-Pacific region; changes in Holocene sea level; rock art studies; and Cultural Resource Management (CRM). Sessions within six major themes were often regionally focused and examined such topics as identifying trade, sociopolitical complexity, and ethnic identity in the archaeological record. The 81 papers presented in the three volumes include nearly half of the 166 papers presented at the conference. However, three of the 25 conference sessions are not included. Most noteworthy is the omission of papers from the rock art studies in Southeast Asia, Australia, and Oceania session, and of papers from the session on the archaeology of western New Britain. Poorly represented in both the conference and publication were papers on CRM and the public. This may be telling us more about how the topic is viewed by many researchers in the Pacific and eastern Asia than about its importance to the field.

The most difficult aspect of using the three volumes is its organization. Papers are not grouped by obvious topics, geographic areas, or time periods. For example, Volume 1 contains 25 papers drawn from various sessions under three of the major research themes. Although most of the papers are generally organized by geographic area,

with 14 papers covering Southeast Asian research, the other half of the papers discuss the archaeology of Nepal, India, Sumatra, New Caledonia, and Java, ranging from discussion of the environment to *Homo erectus* to linguistics. As no headers are used to highlight groupings of articles by topics, the reader is forced to scan through a list of 25 to 28 titles followed by authors' names to identify a specific topic or area of interest. The problem is repeated in the subsequent volumes, where the only divisions between papers are an increasing number of advertising inserts.

Despite the eclectic compilation of topics and the difficulty in locating specific papers, much of the work presented in the volumes contributes significant new ideas and data to current discussions in Pacific and East Asian archaeology. While some of these contributions are rather brief descriptions of recent findings—for example, David Addison's finding of variability in plant cultivation based on differing environmental zones in traditional Marquesan agriculture systems (Vol. 2)—others are more synthetic discussions of long-term research projects, for example, Richard Engelhardt and Pamela Rogers' ethnoarchaeological study of maritime hunter-gatherers who inhabit islands off the coast of southern Thailand (Vol. 3). Some papers appear to be slightly modified and scaled-down versions of more comprehensive articles published elsewhere—for example, Michael Graves and David Addison's paper "Models and Methods for Inferring the Prehistoric Colonization of Hawai'i" (Vol. 2), which, nonetheless, adds to the notion that colonization itself does not necessarily equate with the successful establishment of a population sufficient in carrying capacity to sustain itself in the new island location.

Some of the most interesting papers

look at the interrelationship of landscape changes (Chikamori, Vol. 2), and sea-level changes in the Marianas (Amesbury et al., Vol. 2) and New Ireland (Rosenfeld, Vol. 3), examining effects on resource exploitation patterns.

Other papers look for new approaches to understanding how exchange systems operated in various parts of the Pacific through time. For example, Allen examines the interisland movement of adze stone, ceramics, and pearl shell from archaeological contexts, and Green reviews current evidence for the interisland movement of commodities in remote Oceania during the Lapita horizon (both Vol. 2). While these and other papers discuss topics traditionally

of concern to archaeologists working in the Pacific, they do so with an attempt to bring better data and fresh insight.

Selected papers within the volumes are likely necessary additions to the libraries of Pacific and East Asian anthropologists, palaeoanthropologists, and archaeologists, so long as you are prepared to navigate through the pages looking for particular subject areas of interest. As more edited conference proceedings are published, it would better serve the public if papers were critically selected and organized around specific themes, and if editors provided summary introductions and discussions that integrated key arguments in the research field.

*Ancient History: Indonesian Heritage.* John Miksic. Singapore: Archipelago Press, 1996.

*Reviewed by* MIRIAM T. STARK, *University of Hawai'i*

In the world of Southeast Asian archaeology, we are only just beginning to learn about the vast ancient history of Indonesia. *Ancient History: Indonesian Heritage* is stunning and panoramic in scope, as it describes the heritage of a country containing more than 13,600 islands and the world's fourth largest population today. Contributions by international experts in various fields (archaeology, art history, epigraphy, literature) are engaging and clearly written. This volume is part of the twelve-volume *Indonesian Heritage* series. Other volumes in the series focus on topics as diverse as the human environment, early modern history, plants, wildlife, religion and ritual, and the performing arts. One goal of *Ancient History* is to provide a scholarly introduction to the world of Indonesian history, archaeology, and art history. One of the volume's primary contributions to archaeology lies in its dual focus on the prehistoric and historic periods.

The volume's nine sections, each containing multiple contributions, cover more than a million years of prehistory and history. The argument that we cannot divorce history from archaeology and vice versa provides a unifying thread throughout *Ancient History*. Its introductory section weaves together indigenous and Western methods of documentation and reckoning time (scripts, calendrical systems, and archaeological techniques). The volume's next section begins in deepest prehistory, with the Pleistocene hominids of Java, and examines key Holocene transitions that are found elsewhere in island Southeast Asia: the development of foraging adaptations and of early population movement, and the shift toward plant and animal domestication. Several sections then address aspects of emergent political complexity through different areas of Indonesia, with special focus on Java, Bali, and Sumatra. The high caliber of entries in this section reflects their authors, who are expert archaeologists with decades of experience in various topics. Color illustrations of pollen records,

isotopic chronology, Pleistocene stratigraphy, and artifacts provide excellent supporting materials for the text, and give readers a glimpse into the nature of archaeological research.

The next major section, "Indonesia at the Dawn of History," bridges the transition from the prehistoric period and the era in which the earliest written documents exist from Indonesia. This period witnessed the development of international maritime trade networks throughout much of Southeast Asia. The volume describes several locales in the Indonesian archipelago that developed in response to demands for trade during this time. The fact that several religious ideologies (Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam) swept through Indonesia during the past two millennia may explain why so many traditional histories of the region have focused on the transformative nature of such contact. Few archaeologists today embrace that approach. Like historians O. W. Wolters (and van Leur before him), most contributors to this volume assert that Indonesians adopted external ideas and technology selectively. Through time, they argue, local populations incorporated these foreign elements into a thoroughly Indonesian expression.

Nearly one-half of *Ancient History* is devoted to studies of the Classic period, which began in the eighth century with the emergence of Sriwijaya (southeast Sumatra) and Mataram (south-central Java). The oldest standing buildings of Indonesia date to this period, as does the earliest writing and the Javanese temple complexes of Borobodur and Prambanan. The volume divides the Classic period into four sections: (1) Early Classic period; (2) Life in Early Classic Indonesia; (3) Middle Classic Period; and (4) Late Classic Period: fourteenth to sixteenth centuries. Archaeological approaches dominate the first section of the volume, but art and architectural historians provide the foundation for much of what we know about the Classic period of Indonesia. One can, however, feel the editor's hand in this section of the volume, as John Miksic constantly seeks a balance between art historical concerns (architec-

ture, iconography, sculpture, and religion) and more conventional archaeological concerns (economy, daily activities, and political structure). The section ends with a detailed discussion of the Majapahit Empire, which was the largest empire that ever emerged in Southeast Asia. J. Miksic's contributions emphasize the role Majapahit played in unifying what we now recognize as Indonesia. Two shorter sections, the early Islamic period (A.D. 1300–1600) and the heritage of Indonesian literature, conclude the volume with thoughtful discussions of architecture, commercial life, Islamic beliefs, and literature.

*Ancient History* has an ambitious and, possibly, unattainable goal: to capture fully the deep, rich cultural heritage of the region's largest and most diverse country. Such a goal is perhaps impossible in a single volume for any country of the world. Contributors throughout this volume also point out gaps in our current knowledge of Indonesian archaeology, art history, and architecture. As one example, our knowledge of Pleistocene archaeology is biased by millennia of geomorphological processes (particularly erosion and alluviation) and sea-level changes that have altered the landscape and covered archaeological sites. Authors also point out gaps in our knowledge of Indonesia's architectural history, despite detailed and substantial architectural descriptions in the volume's contributions. Chinese visitors to the region described wooden architecture that included palaces and commoners' homes; our only knowledge of ancient wooden architecture, other than the occasional remains of a pile dwelling, is found in bas-reliefs from Borobodur. Contemporary civilizations in India and in mainland Southeast Asia had vibrant brick architectural traditions before the tenth century; most brick architectural remains in Indonesia have been eradicated by centuries of subsequent construction and brick recycling.

This volume has many strengths, not the least of which is its mixture of scholarly text and abundant illustrations (maps, drawings, photographs, and charts). It appeals most to readers with interests in either ar-

chaeology or art history. Students of Southeast Asian religions will find ample discussion of the nature and impact of various ideologies (Hindu, Buddhist, Muslim) on Indonesian culture, and those interested in Indonesian literature will not be disappointed. This reviewer particularly enjoyed the volume's section on pre-history, with its discussions of Pleistocene archaeology (by A.-M. Semah, F. Semah, D. Grimaud-Herve, H. Widiyanto, and H. T. Simanjuntak), succinct reviews of the Austronesian hypothesis (P. Bellwood), and emergent complexity in Bali and Java (I. W. Ardika). Archaeologically inclined readers will also appreciate P. Manguin's updated discussions of Sriwijaya and architectural studies by J. Dumarçay and J. Miksic, and the anthropological orientation to life in early classic Indonesia that includes studies of agriculture (Ph. Subroto), economy (J. Christie), and settlement patterns (Mundardjito). The extensive section on Majapahit is an excellent primer on fourteenth-to-sixteenth-century Indonesia, and the inclusion of the early Islamic period illustrates the continuity from an indigenous past to the present.

Readers generally expect book reviewers to provide crisp, trenchant critiques that highlight both the contributions and problems inherent in a particular publication. *Ancient History*, however, eludes this kind of criticism: its target audience is an educated public, rather than the global community of Southeast Asian archaeologists. Accordingly, the volume seeks to document aspects of Indonesia's rich cultural heritage rather than provide closely argued theoretical arguments that we associate with academic publications. *Ancient History* emphasizes the importance of multidisciplinary research and the place of archaeological insights for understanding points along the entire trajectory of human history in the region. As an educational tool, *Indonesian Heritage: Ancient History* is precisely the type of book that persuades readers to delve deeper into aspects of Indonesia's deep and multifaceted human history. Archaeologists, art historians, historians, and specialists in historic preservation all benefit from such carefully edited and amply illustrated publications as *Ancient History*.