

EDITORIAL

THIS ISSUE OF *Asian Perspectives* includes several papers that were first presented in a symposium we organized on the topic of exchange, interaction, and social complexity in Oceania at the 54th annual meeting of the Society for American Archaeology in Atlanta, Georgia, in April 1989. One of the goals of the symposium was to demonstrate the advances archaeologists have made recently in studying prehistoric contexts of exchange throughout Oceania. We believe such studies are important because the ethnohistory and ethnology of this part of the world are replete with descriptions of exchange and trade. As a result, there has been a tendency to extrapolate into the distant past the relatively modern forms of exchange that existed at the time of European contact. Equally important, anthropologists who have observed contemporary exchange relations in Oceania have linked their findings to other components of social systems (e.g., prestige enhancement, risk sharing, social differentiation). Archaeologists working elsewhere in the world, in turn, have looked to these functional accounts of exchange in Oceania for analogues to prehistoric contexts in such diverse places as North America and Europe. The archaeological study of exchange in Oceania, especially well represented in the papers included here, suggests that extrapolations through time or space must be viewed cautiously. In Oceania, the role and nature of exchange during the prehistoric past was different in certain respects from what has been described for the ethnological present or the recent historical past.

One area in which Oceanic archaeologists have made great strides is the study of the provenance of exchanged commodities. The combination of island settings with widely variable resource distributions and relatively high prehistoric population densities produced specialized production of a variety of raw materials and goods. Technically, we have had great success in identifying the introduction of imported items by employing both compositional and macroscopic characteristics. By systematically combining these approaches with investigations of entire assemblages or groups of assemblages, we may soon be able to estimate the direction and rate of exchange and to model variation within several domains of exchange that apply to entire islands or regions of Oceania. Such details about prehistoric exchange are out of reach for many of our colleagues working in other parts of the world.

In order to take full advantage of our special circumstances for inferring exchange and its associated variability, we must continue to place our findings within more general interpretive or explanatory contexts. These include ethnological comparison, historical generalization, and evolutionary theorizing. By viewing specific results against a larger background, the significance of prehistoric Oceanic exchange will emerge, to challenge new generations of local archaeologists and also to stimulate research by archaeologists in other parts of the world. We believe that the pre-

history of Oceania has a dual role to play, both locally and globally. The papers included in this issue of *Asian Perspectives* represent a significant advance.

Many of the regular subscribers to *Asian Perspectives* will have noticed something rather unique about volume 29. For the first time in ten years the volume year is actually the year of publication. In other words, we are now printing on or very close to our advertised schedule of two issues per year, appearing in May and November. We expect to maintain this schedule of publication in the future. The Department of Anthropology of the University of Hawaii and the University of Hawaii Press deserve our thanks for the support they have given the journal over the past few years to ensure that it would again appear on a regular and timely basis.

As we now move into an era in which *Asian Perspectives* will continue to publish promptly, we are seeking suitable manuscripts for review. What kinds of manuscripts are we interested in receiving? First, although we continue to emphasize the archaeology of Asia, we look to the Pacific Ocean as the geographic context of Asia. Thus, our geographical coverage is broad, including not only Asia (in all of its manifestations), but also Australia and New Guinea, Island Melanesia, and Remote Oceania. Second, we seek papers that deliberately contribute to both culture history and the practice of archaeology or anthropology. We can no longer assume that culture history is uninformed by archaeological method or theory, and papers that address issues pertinent to both aspects of archaeology are welcome here. Finally, we are exploring the idea of producing future issues of *Asian Perspectives* with a well-defined thematic, topical, or areal focus. This has been done in the past, and this issue is an example of a thematic focus.

We encourage readers to propose ideas (and contributors) for subsequent issues. This is an exciting time for archaeologists working in Asia and the Pacific, and we look forward to presenting the results of their research in future issues of *Asian Perspectives*.

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