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NEW ZEALAND ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER



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BOOK REVIEWS

Peter Bellwood, Man's Conquest of the Pacific: the prehistory of Southeast Asia and Oceania. Collins, Auckland, 1978. 419 pp., glossary, bibliography, index. N.Z. \$35.

Peter Bellwood, The Polynesians: prehistory of an island people. Thames and Hudson, London, 1978, No. 92 in the series Ancient People and Places, General Editor Glyn Daniel. 167 pp., bibliography, index. N.Z. \$21.85.

Peter Bellwood has written two books which add enormously to the archaeological literature of our part of the world. Although they are very different books, perhaps for rather different readers, they are treated together here because of the similarity, at least in part, of their subject matter.

Man's Conquest of the Pacific is a massive book of over 400 liberally illustrated pages. The book covers the evidence of archaeology, linguistics, physical anthropology, ethno-botany and ethnography to draw a picture of man's expansion into the Pacific world. It begins with early man (Homo erectus) in east and southeast Asia and ends with the development of the unique Polynesian cultures of Hawaii, Easter Island and New Zealand at the outer points of the Polynesian triangle.

After a brief introduction there is a chapter on physical anthropology which looks at early man and at studies of the physical anthropology of recent (archaeological) and present populations. Chapter Three is called 'Cultural Foundations' and outlines the archaeology of Pleistocene and early post-Pleistocene stone tool industries in the region. The next three chapters are 'The Cultures of Southeast Asia and Oceania', 'The Linguistic History of the Pacific Area' and 'Subsistence Patterns and their Prehistoric Implications'. These chapters establish an ethnographic, linguistic and economic basis for the material to follow. The remaining seven chapters of the book deal with the post-Pleistocene archaeology of the region. The topics are 'Neolithic and Early Metal Age Cultures on the Southeast Asian Mainland', 'Neolithic and Metal Age Cultures of Island Southeast Asia' and the prehistory of Melanesia, Micronesia, Polynesia (two chapters) and New Zealand.

The chief excitement of this book is the way in which the Pacific world is shown to have sprung from earlier developments in Asia. New Zealand and Polynesian archaeologists are exposed to a cultural diversity, and indeed a developing civilisation, of direct relevance to their own interest. The chapters on the Neolithic and Early Metal Age in Southeast Asia are of particular fascination in this regard.

It is perhaps inevitable that some of Bellwood's work has been overtaken by events. The book itself appears to have been three years with the publishers which cannot have helped. Thus, for example, Houghton's re-examination of the Wairau Bar skeletal material (see Leach, 1977) must cause some reassessment of the relative importance of male and female burials. Similarly, while it is by no means settled, it seems likely that the number of moa species is rather less than '20 to 22' and more in line with the 13 suggested by Cracraft (1976). And there are a number of other areas where the latest research rather alters the picture given by Bellwood.

Another aspect of the book which might cause some surprise is the relative size of the sections on different parts of the Pacific. Our Hawaiian friends might be a little peeved that their island group rates only nine pages whereas New Zealand has a chapter of forty pages to itself.

Nonetheless, do not be put off, this book is quite superb, and essential reading for anyone seriously interested in Pacific prehistory. For those of us buried in Polynesian (or New Zealand) archaeology the horizons offered by Bellwood, linking our world to a much wider one, are enormously stimulating.

The second book, The Polynesians: prehistory of an island people, is an altogether slighter affair. It comes from the Thames and Hudson series, 'Ancient People and Places', edited by Glyn Daniel. It offers an introduction to Polynesian prehistory, perhaps directed towards the more general reader who has little background knowledge in the subject.

The book has five chapters. An introduction looks at the geography and major cultural divisions of Polynesia and gives the briefest outline of early European contacts and early theories of Polynesian origins. Chapter Two looks more deeply at Polynesian culture, language, society, economy and sea-faring. Chapter Three looks at the origins of the Polynesians as defined by archaeology: the Lapita Culture and expansion into western and eastern Polynesia. Chapters Four and Five briefly introduce the archaeology and prehistory of the various Polynesian island groups. The book is well illustrated, with examples of most of the best known Polynesian archaeological monuments shown.

While much of the material in the smaller book can be found in the larger, nonetheless it is not just the Polynesian material of the Collins book between new covers. The Polynesians is a coherent work and stands on its own. Indeed it is probably a better 'read' than the larger, rather encyclopaedic book so densely packed with information.

Both books are expensive: the Collins book is \$35 and the Thames and Hudson, \$21.85. In Man's Conquest of the Pacific the duplication of a number of quite adequate black and white photographs in a section of colour plates seems an unnecessary expense. The larger book, however, must be the better buy. In addition to the immense amount of material on Southeast Asia, Melanesia and Micronesia, Polynesia itself is treated more fully than in the smaller book. But for those who are just beginning to explore the prehistory of Polynesia for themselves the Thames and Hudson publication would be best. And, who knows, familiarity with it might lure the reader into buying the other, monumental, and much more stimulating, work.

References

- Cracraft, J. 1976 The Species of Moas (Aves: Dinornithidae). In Olsen (ed.) Collected Papers in Avian Palaeontology Honouring the 90th Birthday of Alexander Wetmore. Smithsonian Contributions to Paleobiology, 27.
- Leach, B. F. 1977 Sex and Funeral Offerings at Wairau Bar: a re-evaluation. N.Z.A.A. Newsletter, 20:107-113.

Nigel Prickett

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Allen, J., J. Golson and R. Jones, Editors, Sunda and Sahul, Prehistoric Studies in Southeast Asia, Melanesia and Australia. Academic Press, London, 1977. 647 pp. Price N.Z. \$30.99

Collections of symposia papers do not often sit as well together as the eighteen papers in this volume. Resulting from the 1975 Pacific Science Conference in Vancouver the papers attack the so recently blank canvas of the prehistory of Australia, New Guinea and the parts of Asia closest thereto. The charms of the book are firstly that so many of the authors have chosen to present a broad perspective relating their more localised work to a wider scene, and secondly that so many convey the excitement of their own discoveries and the possibilities these have opened up.

There are five sections; "Stone tools and social judgements" opens the book with papers by Peter White, Karl Hutterer and Brian Hayden collectively challenging earlier views of the technology of the prehistoric inhabitants of the area. All look at the whole region. Hayden's view of the Hoabinhian is full of ideas, some of which should be testable on existing data.

The second section, the longest, is "Peopling the new lands" with six contributions covering the question of the crossing of the Sunda to Sahul boundary and the processes within Australia in settling it and in it's inhabitants becoming the way they are, both physically and culturally. Sandra Bowdler's paper arguing that the colonisation of Australia was via the coast and A. G. Thorne's on the surprisingly different morphologies of the prehistoric inhabitants of southeastern Australia, so recently revealed archaeologically, are both specially recommended. W. W. Howells provides a timely review of the Australian material taken with Asian fossil man, and Tindale gives a fascinating ethnological snippet on the Kaiadilt of the Gulf of Carpentaria illustrating a maritime subsistence with a minimal technology.

The third section is "Birds and boats" opened by a paper by Jared M. Diamond on analogies between the distribution of man and other animal species. The second paper is the received version of Rhys Jones on the causes of the presence and absence of man on the islands formed by the late Pleistocene sea rise in South Australia and Tasmania. It is a delightful and convincing synthesis and the price of the book would be worth it for this paper alone. Thirdly Jim Allen reviews the archaeological evidence for the development of the trading network established by the Motu on the south coast of Papua.

An ethnological section mainly on economics might not at first sight seem appropriate but two papers in particular are most germane. David Harris reviewing Torres Strait subsistence patterns gives fine examples of the cline from exploiting an environment to managing it. This and Betty Meehan's report on the role of shellfish in the diet of a contemporary group should be compulsive reading for economic archaeologists. The final section of the book has two papers, one each by Doug Yen and Jack Golson on archaeological evidence of agriculture. Yen reviews the plant identifications for Spirit Cave and other Hoabinhian sites in Thailand - a cautious and frank contribution on the controversial claims of domestication. Golson's report on his excavations at Mt. Hagen in the New Guinea highlands is important for its implications on the origins of Melanesian horticulture though the author presents the evidence in a way which seems to presume readers have prior knowledge of the site.

The book is reproduced from typescript and lacks line justification but is quite easy on the eye none the less. The tables have been specially set and the line drawings are a great credit to Winifred Mumford, both compensating for the murky (but fortunately less important) photographs.

Garry Law

Peter Bellwood, Archaeological Research at Lake Mangakaware, Waikato 1968-1970. Volume 12, Otago University Studies in Prehistoric Anthropology; Monograph No. 9 of the New Zealand Archaeological Association; Dunedin, University of Otago, Dept of Anthropology, 1978. 79 pp., 2 appendices, 39 figures, bibliography.

This is a comprehensive report on the results of archaeological excavations carried out by the author, on two swamp pa sites, and the recovery of wooden artefacts from the lake bed, at Lake Mangakaware, in the Waikato district of the North Island of New Zealand, in the period August 1968 to December 1970.

Bellwood states his themes succinctly in the Introduction, as follows:

- " 1) A general description of Lake Mangakaware, particularly with respect to the environment and prehistoric sites.
- 2) A description of excavated structures at Mangakaware site 2, together with archaeological features associated with them.
- 3) A description of the artefacts recovered during the MA 2 excavations, which together form a localised assemblage and date from approximately the 16th and 17th centuries A.D.
- 4) A description of the artefacts recovered from the bed of Lake Mangakaware in the immediate vicinity of MA 2.
- 5) A description of the artefacts recovered from the bed of Lake Mangakaware in the vicinity of Mangakaware site 1."

These are covered in detail, interspersed with numerous figures showing site plans, interpreting stratigraphic information, and illustrating the variety of artefacts recovered in the three assemblages.

The report finishes with a section of conclusions on the artefacts and the site in general. There are also two appendices - the first on radiocarbon dates from Mangakaware site 2; and the second on analysis of human bone from the same site.

One can almost excuse the poor quality of the reproduction and format - with the distraction of lines of type showing through on the figures and the back of pages, and the faded quality or non-existence of many letters in the text - because of the scope and detail of the material presented, which in itself makes this a volume worth having.

The publication of this report is valuable as it is the first major work on Maori swamp pa, and highlights their importance, through preservation of organic materials, in providing information on the economy, material culture and life of the Maori people who inhabited them. It also poses a question - where is the companion volume - the final report on the excavations at Lake Ngaroto, this report would add immeasurably to the knowledge of swamp pa, and build on the foundations provided by the Mangakaware volume.

Dorothy Brown

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B.W. Hayward and J.T. Diamond, Prehistoric archaeological sites of the Waitakere Ranges and West Auckland. Auckland Regional Authority, 1978. 122 pp. and 32 pp. of maps and figures. NZ \$3.00.

This report has diverse origins. Jack Diamond has made this area his "patch" for many years, finding and recording prehistoric and historic sites. Bruce Hayward, a geologist by training, happily combined his geological research with a similar interest in the archaeology. They have been supported by the Historic Places Trust for part of the work and both have been engaged by the Auckland Regional Authority on matters concerning the Authority Park which, together with Authority water catchments, covers much of the study area. The authors review the traditional history of the area before turning to the 550 prehistoric sites which they not only list but proceed to describe their forms and discuss their distribution in commendable detail. Plans are given for 34 of the sites including many of the 55 pa they have recorded.

In scope and presentation this report has few peers and it will form a sound base for the management of the sites concerned. The report is reproduced from type-script and bound in printed covers.

The report may be ordered by sending \$3.00 to Parks Department, Auckland Regional Authority, Private Bag, Auckland.

Garry Law

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