



NEW ZEALAND
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NEW ZEALAND ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER



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BOOK REVIEWS

Jesse D. Jennings (ed.), The Prehistory of Polynesia. Australian National University Press, Canberra, 1979. 399 pp. A\$37.50.

Jennings sets out to achieve "a book that would be written simply, as free of jargon as possible, to serve as an introductory text for undergraduate students It ought also to serve to introduce the lay reader to the entire field". His vehicle is a collection of fifteen papers by thirteen authors to cover the field with regional views, views of the origins of Polynesians to the west of Polynesia and overviews of voyaging, physical form, subsistence and settlement patterns. The handsome book that results bears the mark of an editor who obviously knew what he wanted and who to get it from, and which must be judged to have achieved what was set out to be achieved in as much as any collection of papers can.

But at the price, it will be to many students a book seen briefly on counter issue, and this is a shame as many of the contributions will stand re-reading, and the full value of the book is only gained in having it to hand.

Some of the chapters present views or material which are little advanced on older papers or books but are nevertheless clear and concise accounts. The chapter on language by Ross Clark and that on physical anthropology by William Howells fall most clearly into this category. However, many of the chapters deal with material which has no other up-to-date summaries available. Roger Green's summary of the many aspects of Lapita, and its relation to Polynesian origins in Oceania, covers much material which has only come to light in excavation or analysis in the 1970's and has hitherto not been presented in as useful a summary as it is here. Patrick McCoy's treatment of Easter Island prehistory too will fill a great need for a summary of its prehistory in light of the recent attention the island's archaeology has been receiving. David Tuggle tackles Hawaiian prehistory emphasising recent achievements in relating its archaeology to Hawaiian social organisation and land use systems, and their development. It is noteworthy that of a great bulk of work done in Hawaii in the last 15 years, only a part of it rates reference here - just that part which has been conceived and undertaken by people with research interests uppermost in their minds, even where the immediate impetus for the work is rescue archaeology.

Yosihiko Sinoto reviews the prehistory of the Marquesas and its relation to the Societies as revealed in his excavations at Huahine, while the still all too bare bones of Fijian prehistory are assembled by Everett Frost - both are areas where sequences of artefact styles

tell us a little too much of what and when rather than why. Peter Bellwood contributes chapters on settlement patterns and a rather unsatisfying chapter on the oceanic context of Polynesia. Kenneth Emory authors the chapter on the Societies. Peter White provides a chapter on Melanesia which is nicely judged in its selection of material of relevance to the rest of the book, though his elevation of non-Austronesian languages to the status of linguistics handle 'NAN' grates rather.

Two contributions which can be unhesitatingly commended are Ben Finney's section on voyaging and the perspective offered by Patrick Kirch on subsistence and ecology where the respective experiences of living the subjects on Hokulea and Futuna shines through. Janet Davidson contributes a section on Samoa and Tonga and a second on New Zealand which very neatly binds together many of the themes running in New Zealand archaeology in the last twenty years and whets one's appetite for a longer version.

Janet Davidson concludes her section:

"To many Polynesianists, New Zealand prehistory is a thing apart. To the New Zealand prehistorian, on the other hand, it has proved to be absorbing, with the rest of Polynesia irrelevant. This is unfortunate, for New Zealand prehistory is firmly rooted in its Polynesian beginnings and is itself an important chapter in the total story of Polynesian prehistory"

The message therein needs heeding in more than New Zealand, if this volume is ever to be succeeded, for the trend to insularity is more widely apparent on the evidence of this book.

Garry Law

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Charles Higham and Brian Vincent, Gabriel's Gully - An Archaeological Survey. Anthropology Department, University of Otago, Studies in Prehistoric Anthropology, Vol.14, 1980. 113 pp. \$4.00.

This report has been published as No. 14 in the University of Otago Anthropology Dept 'Studies in Prehistoric Anthropology'. Interesting how it slips into a series on prehistoric anthropology - professional licence? Perhaps a little unfair on these subscribers who expected to receive publications on prehistory topics?

However, the means of publication aside, it is good to see the results of another goldfield survey in print. With the rising price of gold, sites in mining localities are becoming some of the most threatened in New Zealand.

Gabriel's Gully was the first major goldfield to be discovered in Otago and like the other fields experienced its share of technological innovations as the miners sought to extract the increasingly hard to obtain metal. These developments are well documented in a useful introductory resume of mining in the survey area. The next section provides a more detailed analysis by sub-areas, leading into a brief summary and recommendations. The latter are commendable in that they offer suggestions on public interpretation.

The report is attractively presented, i.e., it has a well designed cover, but inside it is marred by weaknesses in layout rather than content. Sixty percent of the volume is taken up with two appendices composed of a gazetteer of the recorded sites and diagrams of selected sites. The lengthy layout of the gazetteer section indicates the writers were not paying for the paper, but the greatest difficulty lies in the fact that the diagrams and their text are completely separate, necessitating an inordinate amount of leafing through the pages to relate the two.

The report ends with an excellent set of captioned photographs illustrating the history of mining in the Gully. These make it easier for an uninitiated reader to understand the surviving archaeological evidence.

Overall, a report which will be useful for field recorders and those interested in mining archaeology and history. It will also be of considerable value to those concerned with archaeological resource management and interpretation.

Neville Ritchie

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What is to be done with review copies of overseas archaeological books which occasionally land on the editor's desk? The aim of the book reviews section of the Newsletter is to cover material of direct interest to New Zealand archaeologists. We cannot hope to do justice to the immense number of archaeological books now being published overseas. Nor can we be selective with books - it is the publishers who select us and not vice versa.

Three books recently received are very briefly noted below. What do readers think? Would you like some notice of these overseas books or would you prefer the Newsletter to confine its reviews to New Zealand and Pacific material? Write and let us know.

Richard N. Bailey, Viking Age Sculpture in Northern England. Collins, London, 1980 (Collins Archaeology Series 1). 288 pp. \$38.00.

S.C. Stanford, The Archaeology of the Welsh Marches. Collins, London, 1980 (Collins Archaeology Series 2). 288 pp. \$44.25.

These two books are the first of a new archaeological series from Collins. The blurb says,

"Archaeology is moving so fast that it is difficult for amateurs to keep up with what the professionals are doing. The Collins Archaeology series sets out to give the interested reader a straightforward account of what is happening in particular fields, whether periods, industries, regions, or techniques."

Forthcoming titles include Houses, Iron and Steel, Church Archaeology, Mathematics in Archaeology, The Archaeology of South West Britain, Prehistoric and Roman Agriculture and Settlement in Britain. The first two volumes have lots of photographs and drawings and are well produced in a pleasing and easy to read format. But... the price!

The published volumes, together with most of those promised, are clearly directed at the British market and so will have a limited appeal here. Nonetheless, Bailey's book on the sculptures of northern England in the period from about 800 to 1050 A.D. must be of more than merely local interest: the art itself has a universal quality which will see to that. The wide influence of the Vikings on the northern world, along with the present archaeological explorations of Viking York, which sometimes makes news here, should also arouse interest. The book is a thoroughly satisfying introduction to the topic.

Stanford's book is less successful. In attempting to cover a great deal of ground from the palaeolithic to the industrial revolution the author is forced to assume much on the part of the reader. There will be few New Zealand readers who have the background knowledge to make the best of the book. Some of the line drawings are below the usual high standard from British archaeologists.

Arnold C. Brackman, The Luck of Nineveh. Eyre Methuen, London, 1980. 349 pp. \$22.75.

Arnold Brackman is an American who has written a breezy account of the 19th century archaeological discovery of the Assyrian empire in Mesopotamia. The book is, in effect, a biography of Layard. As such, however, it falls far short of the standard set by Gordon Waterfield's Layard of Nineveh (John Murray, 1963). Likewise, if it is a general history of Mesopotamian archaeology you want you can still do a great deal worse than read Seton Lloyd's marvellous Foundations in the Dust (Oxford University Press, 1947). Brackman's book may suit some tastes but it did not suit mine.

Nigel Prickett