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REVIEW

Graves, M.W. and R.C. Green (eds.) *The Evolution and Organisation of Prehistoric Society in Polynesia*. New Zealand Archaeological Association Monograph 19. 1993 125pp. \$39.50 (NZAA members: \$28.00)

This latest monograph from the New Zealand Archaeological Association originated as a session entitled "Evolution of Late Prehistoric Social Systems in Polynesia" organised by the editors for the XVII Pacific Science Congress held at Honolulu in 1991. It contains eight papers from that session, 2 further papers solicited for the volume, and a brief introduction by the editors.

Graves, Green and the series editor, Nigel Prickett, are to be congratulated for producing the volume relatively quickly after the completion of the conference. It is printed on good quality paper, securely bound under an attractive cover with excellent reproductions of figures, photographs and tables. Most importantly, the papers are still fresh and suggest key research concerns for the next decade.

The title, however, is misleading. First, the volume concerns only late Polynesian social developments. All but one paper deal with developments occurring after 1200 AD following which date structural evidence of socio-political complexity becomes highly visible in the archaeological record. Indeed, the volume is testimony to this date as a stage marker of events in Polynesian history. Those expecting discussion of earlier Polynesian developments will be disappointed.

Second, the volume is not, as suggested by the title, a synthesis of the evolution and organisation of (late) prehistoric Polynesian society. It is actually a collective argument against such synthesis, firstly on the pragmatic grounds that insufficient evidence has yet been collected, but more importantly on the grounds that Polynesian social evolution should not be seen as a monolithic progression but as a series of highly varied, contextually specific and non directional behavioral selections. In this respect, the papers in this monograph depart significantly from standard resource-productivity models of the evolution of social stratification in Polynesia.

Green's editorial overview of community-level organisation, power and elites in Polynesian settlement pattern studies hypothesises an evolutionary shift that saw divergent socio-political developments in East and West Polynesian mythopraxis. In the East, the ancestral gods and the polity were linked in the divinely ascribed power of the chief. In the West, the basis of power and authority developed away from the ancestral pantheon to become founded in personal achievement. Physical structures and features representing stratification are to be interpreted accordingly: *ahu* and *marae* devoted to the gods in the

East, burial mounds and fortifications denoting the personal power of individual chiefs in the West.

There is a tension in the volume, however, between Green's culturally systemic approach and his co-editor's preference for understanding the selective advantage of individual behavioural traits. Graves, in a paper written with Maria Sweeney, reviews the archaeological evidence of East Polynesian religion by scrutinising variation in the morphology and distribution of ceremonial architecture. In interpreting this variation they find systemic cultural evolutionary approaches to be non-explanatory of why specific behavioural variations gained selective advantages in different contexts. By taking a scientific evolutionary approach, Graves and Sweeney demonstrate within the bounds of the available data that the traits of "superfluous" (religious) behaviour and intergroup aggression provide similar advantages in ecologically impoverished environments.

There is another tension that pervades the volume but which is not discussed by the editors: that of evolution versus history. Although the editors in their introduction tout the value of considering Polynesia as an ideal laboratory for evolutionary study, many of the authors in the volume are confronted more directly by the reality of multiple return voyaging, regular inter-island contact and outright inter-societal colonialism and associated drastic social change. While none of the authors preclude the role of history in guiding evolution and introducing new conditions, it is not the same thing as focusing on the dynamic that exists between the two.

Six papers articulate this tension well. C. Kehaunani Cachola-Abad thoroughly reviews the "Orthodox Dual Settlement Model" for the Hawaiian Islands, arguing for rigorous selection of artefact traits for inter-societal comparisons before statements of ancestral relationship versus analogical similarity are made. As a result of his detailed scrutiny of early East Polynesian artefacts and an informed reading of East polynesian voyaging traditions, Cachola-Abad rejects the dual settlement model in favour of an interactionist model of prolonged intersocietal contact within Central Eastern Polynesia and recurrent interaction between CEP and Hawaii.

Helen Leach ponders the role of historical contact in the simultaneous appearance of quarries producing large, morphologically standardised and presumably ritually important adzes at the most distant geographical points of the Polynesian polygon. She cites the quarries as potential evidence of the voyaging diffusion not only of the rocks but also of the idea of ritual status across all ocean boundaries in the second millennium AD. Cristophe Sand buries evolutionary ideas deeper when he analyses the impact of the Tongan maritime chiefdom on late developments in Uvean political culture, drawing suggestive connections between oral historical accounts of Tongan contact and the appearance of fortifications, roads, and other monuments in the Uvean archaeological record.

The balance towards evolutionary thinking is redressed a little, but only a little, in fine papers by David Herdrich and Jeffrey Clark and by Thegn Ladefoged. Herdrich and Clark consider the development in Samoa of *Tia 'Ave* ('star mounds') as reflecting a Goldmanesque shift in Samoan social evolution from divinely-based hereditary rank to personal achievement and ability as the basis for political power. Ladefoged uses GIS data to interpret the apparent rise to ritual and political prowess in Rotuma of the relatively resource poor eastern polities (Oinafa and Noatau) as a selective strategy motivated by their need to secure stable resource supply. Both the Rotuman and the Samoan situations, however, are shadowed by the same post 1200 AD rise of the Tongan 'empire' discussed by Sand.

None of the questions posed in the volume may be solved without further archaeological evidence, a point made well by Richard Walter in discussing developments in the distribution and internal organisation of Cook Island supra-household communities. By drawing on his Ma'uke survey and excavation data he reconstructs a post 1300 AD settlement pattern shift from a nucleated coastal village form to a dispersed inland form which he postulates was caused by agricultural resource depletion. Walter, however, retains the possibility of historical reasons for changes in community forms, such as those that saw Ma'uke communities re-nucleate following the arrival of European missionaries.

The classical case of remote Easter Island, however, is pure evolutionary thinking. In a lengthy paper Jo Anne Van Tilburg uses photogrammetry, laser scans and computer assisted drafting techniques to create a normative model of statue production and transport. Working in tandem with Patricia Vargas' too short paper reporting on latest Easter Island survey results, both authors reject the currently accepted developmental scenario of progressive resource depletion, a settlement shift to the interior and societal collapse under the aegis of a statue producing cult gone mad. Van Tilburg and Vargas together produce a more balanced and variable view of lineage and extended kin group statue producing units employing the full range of ecological conditions on the island within a segmented social geography. This allows a more precise understanding of the selective pressures operating in favour of statue production.

In sum, this is a volume about Polynesian monuments and community structures, where they exist, and why. In presenting their case studies, the various authors canvas a range of artefacts of social complexity and utilise a range of evolutionary approaches that provide a unique glimpse into the thinking of the next decade of archaeological interpretation. It would seem to be a decade of methodological rigor, high technology analysis and more, ever more, data collection. I, for one, appreciated the effort made in this volume to pose questions rather than solve them, but would appreciate it better if some of the questions had included the word 'history'.

Andrew Crosby