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REVIEWS

Bedford, Stuart. 2006. *Pieces of the Vanuatu Puzzle: Archaeology of the North, South and Centre.* (Terra Australis 23.) Canberra, Pandanus Books, Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies ANU. xx + 326 pp, figs., tables, bib., appendices. ISBN 1 74076 093 X. AUD\$45.00 (including GST: AUD\$49.5)

Kevin Jones, Department of Conservation

A glance at the map of the western Pacific will show that an understanding of the prehistory of the vast island domain of Vanuatu, along with the Reef Santa Cruz Islands (part of the Solomon Islands) to the north, can only be the key to the human settlement of the wider Pacific. The South-east Solomons were the subject of a major series of investigations in the 1980s led by Roger Green. At that time, Vanuatu entered its own little Dark Ages with a restriction on archaeological research from 1985 to 1994. When ANU graduate Ralph Regenvanu took up the directorship of the Vanuatu Kaljural Senta (Cultural Center, museum), as Matt Spriggs explains in a pertinent and avuncular introduction to this publication of Stuart Bedford's PhD, new opportunities were made for archaeological research in Vanuatu. Bedford's individual effort, chiefly on the ceramic assemblages, often in collaboration with Spriggs and always with the assistance of the VKS filwokas (Ni Vanuatu fieldworkers), is the subject of this monograph.

Chapter 2 on the (previous) Archaeology of Vanuatu is a dispassionate and sound survey of the work of many hands including the Shutlers, Garanger, Groube, Ward, Spriggs and Galipaud. Some of the literature is in French, some uses dated paradigms, and much of it is scattered through relatively inaccessible literature. This chapter will become a standard source of reference for a good deal of this early literature. In the early 1980s Graeme Ward, reporting on his work on the Banks Islands to the north of Vanuatu, had had occasion to critique the interpretations of José Garanger on the Mangaasi pottery of Efate. Garanger had inferred that it was a non-Lapita tradition and that it may have pre-dated Lapita (that at least was logically consistent).

Bedford's investigation of sites throughout the other island groups of Vanuatu, principally Erromango and Malekula or Malakula (variously spelled throughout the text), like Ward's earlier work on the Banks, raised questions about what had become the received interpretations of Mangaasi.

Bedford's greatest contribution, researched in collaboration with Spriggs, has been to re-survey, excavate and make very sound sense of the Mangaasi site complex and its near-neighbour, Arapus, on the narrow coastal plain on the south-west of Efate. I read closely through the detailed reports in Chapter 3 on Efate. I cannot find any fault in the correlation between text and the many complex section drawings in this chapter. The site of Mangaasi has been eclipsed in significance by Arapus (very first settlement, further from the HWM, deeper, with a useful sequence of ash showers and signs of an uplift sequence). The primary Arapus occupation layer dates to 2900–2800 BP. This places its ceramics directly as a form of Lapita albeit with much plainware. The overall sequence at the Mangaasi site shows that Mangaasi wares and tradition (2200–1200 BP) developed, with the dropping of dentate stamping, from Lapita.

“It is Lapita colonization alone that represents initial human settlement across the archipelago”, concludes Bedford (p. 190). However following that initial phase of settlement, there appears to have been few intra-archipelago networks and the ceramic traditions of the various island groups diverged. Mangaasi is not, as we once might have thought, a widespread ceramic tradition. The divergence of tradition, and presumably a debasing of ceramic technology, finally resulted in a millennium-long, aceramic status for many of the late prehistoric societies of Vanuatu.

The Mangaasi area, the adjacent strait and some offshore islands such as Retoka (the burial place of Roi Mata) is currently in process of nomination as a World Heritage cultural landscape. The new Mangaasi–Arapus site data presented here will materially assist the success of that nomination.

Subsequent chapters detail the ceramics Erromango, Efate and Malekula and the non-ceramic material culture (adzes, ornaments) and faunal remains. The work will become an increasingly grubby, dog-eared item in laboratories dealing with Pacific pottery for its clear analysis and comprehensively illustrated line/stipple drawings of the ceramics. One of the appendices is a useful text glossary of design motifs and another by Dickinson covers petrographic analysis. There is apparently further material relating to this work on the publisher's website but I could not find it.

Chapter 10 notes the remarkable assemblage of species of very large size (e.g., *Trochus niloticus*, giant clam and sea turtles) in the first cultural deposit at Arapus and what appears to have been rapid extinction of some species such as the terrestrial crocodile.

Bedford's concluding remarks cover the need for further research on Lapita in Vanuatu. In writing this, he was aware of the discovery by a filwoka of the remarkable Teouma Lapita burial ground, not covered here of course.

Based on this PhD work, which is notable in its scope and depth of investigation, nobody is better qualified than Stuart Bedford, along with Matt Spriggs, to direct that work and to set it in its proper Vanuatu and Pacific context.

Editor's note

This volume, and others in the Terra Australis series, can be downloaded for free in pdf format from <http://epress.anu.edu.au>, and a print-on-demand copy can also be ordered from the same web site.

Scarlett Chiu and Christophe Sand (eds) 2007. From Southeast Asia to the Pacific. Archaeological Perspectives on the Austronesian Expansion and the Lapita Cultural Complex. Center for Archaeological Studies, Research Center for Humanities and Social Sciences, Academia Sinica, Taipei. 296 pp. (English and Chinese), line drawings, colour plates. \$TWD800 (approx. \$NZD32) ISBN 978-986-00-7567-0

Janet Davidson, Ngakuta Bay, Marlborough

This book arose from a short, intense workshop held in June 2005 in the Center for Archaeological Studies, Research Center for Humanities and Social Sciences, Academia Sinica, Taipei, Taiwan. Over two days, “the participants and the public were able to share the latest discoveries surrounding the origins and spread of Austronesian groups over 3,500 years ago out of Southeast Asia and into the western Pacific.” The publication, which is fully bilingual in English and Chinese, is intended primarily as an introduction for Asian students, scholars and interested members of the general public who are unfamiliar with the subject. However, it will also be a useful introduction for English readers who are not specialists in Austronesian studies or Lapita archaeology. Apart from a few lapses where an author indulges in a throw away line or reference that would be appreciated only by specialists, the papers are good, clear up-to-date reviews that don't assume prior knowledge. They also have the merit of being short.

Scarlett Chiu and Christophe Sand open with a brief introduction and then a paper on the historical and theoretical background to Austronesian origins and the Lapita dispersal in Western Oceania. The volume then takes a west to east direction. Yi-Ch'ang Liu, of the Academia Sinica, discusses the Taiwanese prehistoric sequence with particular reference to the cultures of the Early and Middle Neolithic periods. Cheng-Hwa Tsang, also of the Academia Sinica, describes recent archaeological discoveries in Taiwan and northern Luzon that are of particular relevance to questions of Austronesian expansion.

Matthew Spriggs provides an overview of recent research on the Neolithic and Austronesian expansion within Southeast Asia and into the Pacific.

Three papers deal with aspects of Lapita in the Pacific. Glenn Summerhayes focuses on the Bismarck Archipelago, discussing models for Lapita's appearance, the nature of pottery, settlement and economy, and what happened to it all. He provides a detailed table of all the known Lapita sites in the area. Stuart Bedford summarises the recent exciting results of Lapita research in Vanuatu, definitely the current hotspot for Lapita archaeology. His account of how Vanuatu has been transformed from a Lapita backwater or worse to a major centre of Lapita settlement, largely through better understanding of its geomorphology, could provide a cautionary tale for those who are convinced that the founding Lapita settlement in the Tonga/Samoa area has been conclusively identified. Christophe Sand reviews Lapita colonisation of Fiji and Western Polynesia and proposes a further revision of the pottery sequence there to include a Middle Eastern Lapita component.

In a departure from the regional west-east order, Lisa Matisoo-Smith contributes a genetic perspective, in which she provides an excellent and easily understood summary review of human mitochondrial and Y chromosome variation in the Pacific, the use and limitations of ancient mtDNA and genetic studies of commensal animals and plants in tracing migrations. She stresses the complexity of the human populations in the Pacific and the need for much bigger samples and detailed local studies of modern populations.

Scarlett Chiu and Christophe Sand are joined by Yi-Ch'ang Liu in the final paper, which singles out four specific questions for further research, pointing out areas where evidence is currently weak or altogether lacking. These questions centre on the timing of Austronesian and Lapita movements, genetics and phenotypic variability, economy and houselife, and technology.

This book should be taken for what it is, an attempt to provide a brief but up-to-date overview for non-specialists of a wide and rapidly changing field. Some of its value is in its scope, from Taiwan to Samoa, not just SE Asia or Oceania. Apart from a few lapses in proof-reading it is well produced with adequate to good line drawings and superb colour photos, unfortunately largely limited to two papers, Cheng-Hwa Tsang's on Taiwan and northern Luzon, and Bedford's on Vanuatu.