

Jesse D. Jennings, ed. *The Prehistory of Polynesia*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1979. Pp. 399, illustrations, maps, glossary, contributors, index. \$35.00.

The growth of archaeology in the South Pacific in the last 30 years can now be seen as one of the major developments in world archaeology. This is due not only to the intrinsic importance of the evidence, but also to the way archaeologists in the area deal with it. They continually stress the integral links the archaeology of this region possesses with other branches of anthropology, both empirically and at appropriate levels of interpretation. In helping to chronicle the history of human settlement in the great archipelagoes of the Southern Hemisphere, Pacific archaeologists, by their holistic approach, are also assisting to redress the long-standing North/South imbalance in the study of prehistory. A university department of archaeology which, in its teaching, ignores this development, leaves its students conceptually much the poorer.

Until 1978, however, it was very difficult to teach Pacific prehistory satisfactorily, especially at a distance, because of the lack of a good general literature. Peter Bellwood changed that with the publication in 1978 of his duet, *The Polynesians: Prehistory of an Island People* and *Man's Conquest of the Pacific*. Since then *The Prehistory of Polynesia* has appeared, to provide a third text which slots neatly in size and scope between Bellwood's works.

This is a very useful book. Jennings must be congratulated for marshalling thirteen authors, each a well-known specialist within the general field, to produce between them fifteen chapters on either the prehistory of particular islands or island groups, or wider, related topics. Some of the chapters are very good indeed. The whole, to which the editor provides introduction and epilogue, hangs together in a thematic sense rather better than such joint efforts often do. It is well produced by Harvard. My own students, accustomed to those rather dreary dry-as-dust introductory texts so beloved by some publishers these days, use the book with pleasure. Of the fifteen chapters, seven are devoted to island surveys covering Fiji, Samoa and Tonga, the Marquesas, Easter Island, Hawaii, the Society Islands, and New Zealand (as a matter of editorial policy the Outliers and islands such as the Chathams get only incidental reference). This is balanced by eight chapters on more general topics, which one can only baldly list: the Oceanic context, Lapita, Language, Physical Anthropology, Subsistence and Ecology, Settlement Patterns, and Voyaging. There is an end-piece on Melanesia. Obviously, some papers stand out from a general high standard of writing. I liked especially Green's examination of the Lapita complex, which has a detailed survey of the evidence, island by island. Equally clear is Frost's demonstration on just how much we do, and do not, know about Fijian archaeology, and how important it has now become that: the position be clarified. In a similar vein, Tuggle has presented the first clear overview of the Hawaiian evidence, which goes nicely with Finney's piece on Polynesian voyaging--the latter writing with his usual verve on the saga of the experimental voyage of the *Hokule'a* in 1976. It was an excellent idea to conclude with White writing on the prehistory of Melanesia, Australia and Indonesia in relation to current interpretations of the Polynesian evidence. His treatment is less even-handed than the one adopted by Bellwood in the latter's review of "the Oceanic context." As White puts it: "The problem we face is a constant one in Pacific prehistory: that of trying to understand how much the culture and people of any area or island derive from migration and diffusion, and how much they are the result of local developments from a similar base" (p. 373). Much of this book comprises variations, enigmatic or otherwise, on this theme.

The book has some negative features which stand out the more clearly because of its many virtues. I wish that the editor had been more forthright in pointing up problems and suggesting a general strategy for future research. There is also a certain air of suavity in some of the writing which could inhibit the student from turning to the primary references for the detailed evidence. And, on the subject of references within the text--

could they not have been fuller? Time and again the reader is referred only to author and year of publication, whatever the relevance of the reference. On page 299 I was referred to the *whole* of volume 1 of Malinowski's *Coral Gardens and their Magic* (500 pages) for possible ethnographic parallels in Melanesian yam storehouses to the Vaitootia (Huahine) storage house. I had a very happy hour with Malinowski, but other readers may not have the time for such pleasures.

Peter Gathercole  
Darwin College  
Cambridge, England