

H. M. Voyce, *Design Work as Shown on Bougainville Arrows and Spears*. Rabaul, Papua New Guinea: Trinity Press, 1973. Pp. 34, illustrations. us \$5.00.

The increasingly long list of publications dealing with art and ethnographica from the Solomon Islands has been handsomely augmented by the portfolio of design work on arrows and spears from Bougainville Island (now part of Papua New Guinea) produced by Mr. H. W. Voyce. Meticulously rendered drawings of arrows and spears from Bougainville make up the major portion (thirty pages) of the book. The weapons were collected in the 1920s and 1930s by the artist's son, the Reverend A. H. Voyce, who first came to Bougainville in 1926 as a member of the Methodist Missionary Society of New Zealand. Arrows and spears represented in this publication comprise only part of the vast collections of ethnographica accumulated by the Reverend Voyce during his travels throughout Bougainville. (The bulk of the Voyce collection is contained in the Otago University Museum in Dunedin and the Auckland War Memorial Museum; the Ethnography Department of the British Museum also possesses a comprehensive collection of Voyce material.)

H. W. Voyce made the drawings for this publication while living with his son for nine years at Tonu, Siwai, Bougainville. We are told in an introductory essay that the senior Voyce started the project at his son's suggestion despite personal misgivings about his own lack of artistic training: ". . .having been a gardener all his life, he protested that he couldn't draw." He worked with pencil rather than the more difficult medium of India ink and began by drawing the simplest specimens first, then progressed to the more complicated examples. Drawings in the book are arranged accordingly, resulting in what appears to be an attempt to demonstrate an evolutionary sequence of weapon types.

Artistic training notwithstanding, A. H. Voyce demonstrates considerable artistic talent, and his technical skill in draftsmanship leaves little to be desired. Voyce's interest is in the decorative features of the weapons; consequently, he depicts only the heads of the arrows and spears alongside ornamented sections of the shafts. From six to ten or more weapons appear on each page. Those decorated with closely related patterns are grouped together, allowing the reader to study subtleties of design variation in a degree of detail not possible in the sparsely illustrated accounts of weapons contained in older ethnographic writings on Bougainville. Information about provenance, dimensions, color, and other technical features is handwritten beside or beneath the drawings. Perhaps

of greatest potential significance are the recorded provenances which may facilitate the localization of designs on other weapons and artifacts from Bougainville that lack such precise collection data.

The three-page introductory text of the book was written by Voyce's son, the Reverend A. H. Voyce. Here we are told about the Voyce collection and how the drawing project originated. Reverend Voyce also includes historical quotations that refer to arrows and spears in the contexts of battle, trade, and ritual as evidence of the traditional importance of these weapons on Bougainville.

The text furnishes adequate supplementary information relevant to the drawings, but somehow one wishes for more ethnographic information. Voyce says in his text that ". . . all the design work on plaited 'King' spears, or on bundles of arrows, had meaning, and was not merely decorative art . . . each design had a traditional significance . . ." (page 3). What sort of significance? Perhaps Voyce felt that this was his father's book, essentially a design portfolio rather than a scholarly study of ethnographica, and that to have included too much of his own material would have been inappropriate. (It is also possible that the amount of information about design interpretation in Voyce's possession may not have been as copious as his collections.) This publication is, first and foremost, a portfolio of beautifully executed drawings. Its primary value lies in the presentation of such a large quantity of weapons with geographic attributions and in the precise rendering of decorative details which reveal so vividly the richness of variation in design work utilized for arrows and spears. Both scholars and artists will find the book extremely rewarding.

Deborah B. Waite  
Art Department,  
University of Hawaii