

BOOK REVIEWS

Fiji's Natural Heritage

Paddy Ryan
Exilse Publishing, New Zealand, 2000
ISBN 0-908988-14-1 Hardcover, oversize

Review by Paul Geraghty, University of the South Pacific, Suva

For those who are familiar with the relatively impoverished fauna and flora of Rapa Nui, or even that of any other part of Polynesia, this book focusing on the natural heritage of Polynesia's closest neighbor will be an eye-opener. With thousands of species of plants and fish, over a hundred species of birds, six species of bats, two species of land snake, and so on, Fiji offers a veritable Garden of Eden compared to the more easterly isles of the Pacific.

This is a greatly enlarged and enhanced revision of a work that was first published, in paperback, in 1988. More than 400 more color photographs have been added, and the result is a stunning high quality 288-page publication in hardback. All of the photographs are well chosen, and some are simply superb. Its scope is enormous, with an introductory section setting the historical and geographical scene followed by chapters on coral, worms, mollusks, echinoderms, crustaceans, insects, fish, amphibia, reptiles, birds, mammals, plants, the Fijians, and places to visit. Finally there is a short glossary of biological and other scientific terms, an extensive bibliography, and a very helpful and comprehensive index.

The author lived in Fiji for many years, lecturing in biology at the University of the South Pacific, roaming the islands with notebook and camera, and earning himself a reputation by writing a popular weekly nature column in the *Fiji Times*. The informative but relaxed style he honed during those days is peppered with anecdotes from his ramblings through the Fijian bush, and makes this book a delight to read.



Ryan is a keen observer of the interaction between mankind and the natural world, and there is much here that is of ethnographic interest (including many Fijian names for natural species that are not listed in the dictionaries). Nevertheless, he is no subscriber to the idea that the original inhabitants of Fiji or the Pacific were 'at one with nature'. He takes pains to point out that many animals, in particular flightless birds but also crocodiles and iguanas, were exterminated by the first human colonizers of Fiji. Rapanuiphiles will find much to ponder on here.

An unusual, perhaps even unique, feature of this book is that it will also be published in Fijian translation, in order to help convey not only the author's love of the subject, but also his conservation message, to the indigenous Fijians, who constitute over 50% of the population of Fiji, and own approximately 83% of the land. The publishers should be applauded for taking this initiative, which will encourage the indigenous Fijian people to be better informed, and to play a more positive role in the maintenance of Fiji's fragile environment. Publication of the Fijian version is being funded by the California-based environmental protection organization Seacology as part of its continuing efforts to preserve island cultures and habitats.

Drawbacks are few. I've spotted just a handful of typos, none of which is of any consequence; and of course in a work of this sort there will always be those who feel their particular neck of the woods is hard done by. If you're a fish fanatic, for instance, you may feel that 26 pages is simply not enough. The glossary also could do with expansion, since it lacks quite a few of the technical terms that are used in the text.

For anyone with an interest in the natural history of the region, this landmark work on the islands at the gateway to Polynesia is indispensable. There is simply nothing to compare with it for any other island group in the South Pacific outside of New Zealand. I can only concur with Sir David Attenborough's remarks in an earlier review, that this book is a "superb and – more importantly – comprehensive survey of all aspects of the rich natural world of Fiji.. the sort of guide that anyone with curiosity about the land, the plants and the animals around them is constantly seeking... a book that will, I am sure, be constantly consulted and treasured."

The book is available from: Exilse Publishing, P. O. Box 8077, Auckland, New Zealand; e-mail: mail@exilse.co.nz ; Pacific Island Books, 2802 E. 132nd Circle, Thornton, CO 80241-2003; www.pacificislandbooks.com

On the Road of the Winds: An Archaeological History of the Pacific Islands before European Contact

Patrick Vinton Kirch
The University of California Press, 2000 \$45 hardcover.
ISBN 0-520-22347-0.

Reviewed by Peter R. Mills, University of Hawai'i, Hilo.

Patrick Kirch's *On the Road of the Winds* is an essential new synthesis of Oceanic prehistory – something that has not been attempted on such a comprehensive scale since Peter Bellwood's *Man's Conquest of the Pacific* (1978). Through an introduction and nine subsequent chapters, Kirch draws from an

eclectic range of sources including archaeology, linguistics, and biological anthropology. The work reflects Kirch's command of somewhat parochial fields of Oceanic research, acquired over decades of his own investigations, and through his intimate familiarity with other leading research (Kirch cites well over one-thousand individual references). Reviews of *On the Road of the Winds* by noted Pacific archaeologists have already been published (Bellwood 2000:989-990; White 2000:189-190), and several reviews by non-archaeologists can be found on the World Wide Web. All agree that Kirch has done a masterful job, although a few reviewers comment on problems that Kirch's mastery manages to gloss over. Ultimately, I agree with Peter Bellwood that any problems with the book are too trivial to detract from the major contributions it makes to a truly anthropological history of the Pacific Islands.

On the Road of the Winds defines what Pacific archaeology is and how it is being conducted, a subject that Kirch covers directly in the introduction and in Chapter 1. Besides pointing to the increasing role played by Cultural Resource Management in the Pacific, Kirch lists several dozen indigenous archaeologists currently working in the field (p.40), and supports an earlier statement by Jack Golson that Pacific archaeology is increasingly being conducted by indigenous Pacific Islanders. Nevertheless, Kirch recognizes that there are persistent debates on whether or not archaeology is a vestige of "White colonialism" (p.39). It will be most interesting to see the extent to which indigenous peoples will embrace the contents of this book in their own senses of identity, or if it will be seen as a continuation of White colonialism. Undoubtedly, both positions will be taken.

Chapter 2 sets the foundation for many of the themes in the rest of the book, taking an ecosystems approach, and looking at the interaction of people and island environments. Challenging the Rousseauian myth of *L'homme naturel*, Kirch draws on an extensive body of data to demonstrate that prehistoric human interactions with island environments—from microbes to megafauna—had drastic effects on island ecosystems and the people who lived there. This in turn leads to a diachronic perspective of Oceanic prehistory, beginning in the Pleistocene in "Old" Melanesia (Chapter 3), proceeding through the expansion of Austronesian speaking peoples in association with the Lapita cultural complex (Chapter 4), and the development of more recent cultural traditions in "New" Melanesia (Chapter 5), Micronesia (Chapter 6), and Polynesia (Chapters 7 and 8). Chapter 9 covers the long-term processes that Kirch perceives as part of this history, from the development of voyaging technologies to demographic patterns to the intensification of various cultural traits such as political economies, agricultural systems, and expressions of status and power.

If I were to critique the same range of issues as others, this review would be redundant, and certainly less valuable than the comments made by Bellwood and White, who have been publishing on Oceanic prehistory since I was a child. I believe I may, however, offer some additional insight as to the usefulness of this work in Pacific classrooms. Over the last several years, I have taught a class in Pacific prehistory at the University of Hawai'i at Hilo, where approximately half of my students are of indigenous Pacific Island descent. Lacking an appropriate text-

book, I have had my students break into groups and collectively read hundreds of journal articles and books. Although there is something to be said for sending students to the original publications, the technical nature of many works, and the lack of balanced coverage on regional culture-histories, has made it difficult to look at broad trends beyond the scope of each article or book. Kirch notes his own frustration over the lack of a suitable introductory text, and *On the Road of the Winds* does a splendid job of filling that gap. The chapters are intentionally organized in a format that will allow students and professionals to follow cultural developments in time and space (p. xxi). As a result of Kirch's efforts, students in this fall's class will be able to read an up-to-date compilation of Pacific prehistory, providing a holistic and scholarly perspective on major issues in the field.

One minor criticism is of Kirch's occasional use of Latin and French phrases (pp. 4, 11, 16, 18, 268), and a reference to German opera (p. 63) and, following Aletta Biersack (1990), a Greek Muse (p. 325). These will serve little purpose for indigenous Pacific Island students other than to reinforce the impression that the languages and cultural traditions used to impart academic sophistication in the telling of their own histories are others than their own. Although Kirch and his publisher may have decided that these literary devices will increase readership by demonstrating Kirch's excellent command of Western languages and literature, I expect that this stylistic choice will only serve to intimidate and alienate some of my students. To turn Kirch's phrase on around, "such then are my biases ... *Caveat lector*" (p. 11).

A second issue that I expect may generate controversy with local students is Kirch's presentation of José Garanger's excavations of a burial-ground on Retoka Island, Vanuatu in the 1970s (pp. 139-141). Although Kirch explains that the site was known in oral tradition as the burial location of a famous chief, Roy Mata, and that the island remains sacred, Kirch immediately proceeds with an empirical description of the excavation results, complete with drawings and photographs. Since Kirch in this instance does not address ethical issues surrounding the excavation of human burials and sacred sites, the reader is left wondering about Kirch's stance on the excavation of such sites, and whether or not the local community had much input in Garanger's decision to excavate. One of the major reasons that indigenous students in Hawai'i have not been attracted to the field of archaeology in greater numbers is that archaeologists have a reputation for neglecting such concerns, fueling arguments such as Haunani-Kay Trask's contention that archaeology is a form of White colonialism. Kirch's method of presenting data from the Roy Mata site may serve to perpetuate that impression, regardless of the particular situation in Vanuatu. As a former graduate student of Pat Kirch's, I am well aware that he *is* concerned with archaeological ethics and indigenous involvement in the field, and has been publishing commentaries on those topics for at least two decades. Yet, I expect my students and other archaeology-wary Pacific peoples will remain troubled by the neglect of such discussions in the context of Roy Mata's burial complex.

Nevertheless, Kirch has synthesized the results of over a century of archaeological research in the Pacific, thus making it more accessible to students and professionals everywhere. I ex-

pect that this work will be toted as the flagship of Pacific archaeology for years to come. As the years go by, and new themes in Pacific prehistory develop, *On the Road of the Winds* will remain an excellent historical statement of the current condition of the field.

REFERENCES

- Bellwood, Peter. 1978. *Man's Conquest of the Pacific: The Prehistory of Southeast Asia and Oceania*. William Collins, Auckland.
- Bellwood, Peter. 2000. Book Review: *On the Road of the Winds*. *Antiquity* 74(286):989-990.
- Biersack, Alletta. 1991. *Clio in Oceania: Toward a Historical Anthropology*. Smithsonian Institution Press.
- White, J. Peter. 2000. Book Review: *On the Road of the Winds*. *Asian Perspectives* 39:189-190.

Te Moana Nui. Exploring Lost Isles of the South Pacific

Georgia Lee
Easter Island Foundation, 2001. rapanuibooks@worldnet.att.net \$25
ISBN 1-880636-19-0

Review by Paul G. Bahn

The latest in the Easter Island Foundation's excellent series of publications constitutes a delightful journey through a wide variety of islands in the South Pacific – including Rapa Nui – in the company of Georgia Lee who has had the rare good fortune to visit them all aboard the cruise ship *World Discoverer*. This is a book which can be either dipped into or read cover to cover – it contains something for everyone, from pre-history to scandals, from artistic rogues to sadistic clergymen, from warfare to movies, from pearls to politics, from Robinson Crusoe to Moby Dick – and of course there is the ever-popular mutiny on the *Bounty* and many other ripping yarns.

For each island or group, a map is provided, as well as a timeline of important events. In each case, the author gives us a brief history of the island, and of the characters involved in it, as well as of the present-day conditions of the place and its people. Alongside the many familiar tales such as those of Paul Gauguin or Alexander Selkirk, one encounters fascinating tidbits such as the fact that it was Pitcairn Island which was the first community anywhere to adopt women's suffrage and compulsory education, or that Easter Island is probably the only place in the world where introduced rabbits were eaten by people before they could multiply! In the margins one finds a well-chosen potpourri of quotations from poems, chants, songs, letters and texts, featuring people as diverse as Bill Mulloy, Carlyle Smith, Rupert Brooke and Herman Melville. Overall, the book's design is outstanding, with chapter openings strikingly superimposed on large photographs, and one can forgive the occasional typographic error and a bibliography that is not always in alphabetical order.

This miscellaneous collection of studies of the often tragic pasts and uncertain futures of these wonderful and remote islands is warmly recommended to all those who have any kind of interest in the Pacific region. Who can resist tales of pirate treasure and castaways?

Possessive Markers in Central Pacific Languages

Edited by Steven Roger Fischer
Sprachtypologie und Universalienforschung, Universität Bremen, Postfach 22 04 40, D28334 Bremen, Germany

Review by Joseph C. Finney

This book was published as a special issue of the German (Berlin) journal, *Sprachtypologie und Universalienforschung*, with the translating subtitle: "Language Typology and Universals". In all the papers quoted here, an asterisk denotes a hypothetical reconstruction of an ancestral form, and not an ungrammatical form (its other common use).

The Central Pacific languages (a group with common ancestry) are the Polynesian languages (and dialects), the Fijian communalects (where the distinctions between languages and dialects is unclear), and Rotuman. Fijian and Rotuman probably share a common ancestry that is not shared by Polynesians. Central Pacific is a unit within Oceanic, a subgroup within Eastern Malayo-Polynesian, which is a subdivision of Malayo-Polynesian, which is one of the ten divisions of the Austronesian family of languages.

Of the twelve papers, one deals with the Central Pacific group as a whole, one with Fijian, one with Rotuman, one with the Polynesian group as a whole; and each of the remaining eight deals with a specific Polynesian language: (Tongan and Niuēan in the Tongic group; Tokelauan, Pileni, and East Uvean in the Samoic-Outlier group; and Rapanui, Hawaiian, and Māori in East Polynesian).

The guest editor, Steven Fisher, who also contributed a paper, did well in his selection of the eleven other authors to cover various languages of Central Pacific. The authors know their languages well and they have very ably analyzed the marking of possessive markers in Central Pacific Languages.

JOHN LYNCH'S HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

Lynch begins his historical overview by noting that Central Pacific is a division of the Oceanic languages, which includes some 450 languages. That is about half the (1000 or so) languages in the Austronesian family, though Oceanic is a small sub-sub-sub division within the family. Citing his own work and others, he notes that Proto-Oceanic (henceforth POC) had two basic ways of marking possession. The simpler and perhaps older one was Direct possession. It was used in POC for certain inalienable relations, notably kin terms, parts of something, and passive possession, things done to the possessor (his destruction *of her*).

Direct possession puts the possessed thing at the left, after its article (ART). The possessor is on the right. Because of ancestral syntactic changes that we need not consider (ancestral genitive-ergative becoming nominative in Proto Central-Eastern MP), it is hard to tell whether an "of" element is present at the beginning of the possessor pronoun suffix or not. The issue is not discussed. If the possessor is a pronoun, it is attached as a suffix on the possessed object. Lynch's examples from Proto-Oceanic (hence preceded by an asterisk) are:

Direct possession is almost totally lost in Rotuman and