



EDITORIAL



Somewhat fortuitously the articles in this issue of *Asian Perspectives* are linked by their focus on environmental and subsistence economy research in archaeology. Such studies, of course, have been the hallmark of Polynesian archaeology for the past two decades, and three articles, one each by Kirch and Lepofsky, Athens and Ward, and Sweeney et al., illustrate the kinds of research being conducted to confirm hypotheses and models archaeologists have developed to study prehistoric subsistence and environmental change in Polynesia. Along with these are an article by Barton and White on subsistence and technological change in island Melanesia; one by Stiles on historic patterns of hunter-gatherer exchange with urban and overseas traders in South Asia; and one by Morrison on the role of reservoirs in the complex agricultural economy of Vijayanagara, a city and empire of southern India. Although all of these studies emphasize different aspects of archaeological investigations of subsistence and environment, collectively they contribute to the development of archaeological method and theory, as well as to substantive matters. On a theoretical level the topic of subsistence or environmental change (and conversely, stability) is explored in several of the papers, especially in relation to explanations for the origins of irrigation systems in Polynesia, the timing and role of humans in environmental and landscape change in Hawai'i, and the evidence for changes in food procurement and processing in Melanesia and French Polynesia. We discover that evidence from the archaeological and palaeontological record (and historical linguistics) does not conform to the expectations derived from particular theoretical models, contrary to our earlier beliefs.

The papers in this issue also demonstrate the utility of several different methods of archaeological analysis, including the incorporation of systematic survey and mapping of agricultural systems in the urban landscapes of Asia; the combination of both pollen and sedimentological analyses in Hawai'i; comparative historic linguistic and archaeological analyses of irrigation systems in Polynesia; residue analysis on stone and shell cutting or scraping tools in Melanesia; and documentary and environmental research into historic hunter-gatherer resource procurement and exchange strategies. Methodologically, we have also learned some of the problems that obtain as the result of the analytical units chosen when extrapolating from small, limited archaeological samples to much larger temporal patterns.

Finally, the articles in this issue illustrate several of the new directions that archaeological studies of the environment and subsistence are taking. New (and in some cases, resurrected) propositions have been advanced and they can serve as the basis for additional research on the topic of subsistence and environmental variability in the Pacific and Asia.

This issue of *AP* also introduces a new section, a conference review. Pamela Vandiver reports on the recent International Symposium on Ancient Ceramics. This conference, held in China in late 1992, included researchers from archaeology, materials science, art history, and the ceramic industry. Vandiver describes a number of the papers presented and some of the implications of the research reported at the Symposium. Given the ubiquity of ceramics throughout Asia and much of the Pacific and the increasing interest in the application of new methods of instrumentation and measurement to the analysis of ceramics, this conference offered a rare opportunity to bring together individuals with a wide range of expertise focused on the examination of ceramic variability. The proceedings of this conference should be of interest to a number of readers of this journal. Reviews of conferences, especially where the conferences result in published volumes, will be a semiregular feature of the journal, and I encourage organizers of such conferences to bring them to my attention so that their results can be more widely disseminated.

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