Reviews

Practice into Theory

Critical Approaches to Fieldwork: Contemporary and Historical Practice, by Gavin Lucas, 2000. London: Routledge; ISBN 0-41523533-2 hardback £55 & US$85; ISBN 0-41523534-0 paperback, £16.99 & US$27.99, 246 pp., 29 ills.

Michael Shanks

This is the most intelligent and thought-provoking book on archaeological fieldwork I have read. It is not a manual of techniques. It is not actually about fieldwork *per se*. It is so much more, aspiring to be what I would call a critical analysis of archaeological discourse (discourse, in a post-Foucauldian sense — all the practical apparatus, technical and conceptual machinery that constitutes archaeology as a mode of production of knowledge). In this aspiration the book is perhaps doomed to fail. It does. But I don't mind, because it is full of numerous insights and re-evaluations and genuinely bridges the split between theory and practice that so disables archaeology.

The first two chapters set the scene with a re-evaluation of the history of fieldwork in Britain and the United States. The final short chapter argues for the creativity of fieldwork as a materializing practice, not a destruction but a transformation of the past. The bulk of the book, three chapters headed 'Splitting objects', 'The measure of culture', and 'Eventful contexts', deal essentially with how fieldwork relates to time–space systematics, the categorization at the heart of any archaeological engagement with the material past. The focal points are time/event/action and notions of the object/artefact in relation to concepts of culture.

For many this will be abstract and far from the dirt of the trench. The book actually explains why this has come to be so (the emergence of specialized fieldworkers removed from interpretive practice). But for those committed to a thoughtful archaeological practice, this book is long overdue and essential reading. It poses and answers such appropriate questions as: Why do site reports continue to separate out specialized reports when the discipline has long been based on placing artefacts in context (of whatever kind)? How is archaeological stratigraphy to be conceived in relation to time, event and soil science? Is the concept of site still useful in archaeological fieldwork? Why are events treated as objects in some archaeological field practices? Is excavation really an unrepeatable experiment?

Gavin argues against the idea that the history of archaeology (in Britain and the United States) is a progressive one from antiquarian amateurism to professional anthropological field science. He dislodges from their position as originary genius some of the great figures of orthodox histories of fieldwork (Pitt-Rivers, Petrie, Kidder, Wheeler) while recognizing their contibution (with others) to changing ideas of fieldwork. Here Gavin proposes a tripartite phasing:

1. 1880–1920, the site as repository, fieldwork as the ordered retrieval of objects/artefacts, the subject of typology, prevailing conception of the past — the evolution of culture;
2. 1920–1960, a shift to an interest in the assemblage and culture-groups, requiring control over time–space systematics (phasing and the spatial boundaries of the culture groups), hence the refinement of techniques designed to enable assemblage and culture-group stratification to control chronology, prevailing conception of the past — the history of culture-groups;
3. 1960–present, now the site as record of behavioural patterns, structured activities to be revealed through close analysis of contextual associations, prevailing view of the past — cultural behaviour.

This confounds the distinction between 'an antiquarian' focus on the object and professional field science (usually associated with Pitt-Rivers) (for a complementary argument see Alain Schnapp's history of antiquarianism, *The Discovery of the Past*). Phases one and two are correlated with a shift in anthropological thought from the notion of history as the evolutionary progression of culture in general to a focus upon individual 'ethnographic' cultures (Boas is discussed here). And even though cultural evolution is still a most popular theoretical outlook in archaeology. This scheme also unites processual and post-processual archaeology through their common interest in cultural behaviour (hence implicitly accounting for the delayed emergence, or absence, of a post-processual field practice).

This is clearly a limited treatment of the history of archaeological fieldwork. Gavin explicitly accepts as much in his Introduction. We might accept the argument that it is legitimate to separate British and

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North American fieldwork from European traditions, though there are undoubtedly some important connections. We might accept that the history of the worldwide export and modification of European and American field method requires quite a separate study. I am less convinced that the omission of field practice in British Classical and Near Eastern archaeology is not a detraction from Gavin's argument. It was particularly in this discourse that notions of European culture were worked out in counterpoint to those that receive Gavin's attention.

That I pick up the idea of culture here anticipates the structure of the book. At the heart of this history of fieldwork are changing notions of the artefact in relation to the human groups or cultures that produce them, the temporality of culture change/process, and the loci of both, notions of region and site. Hence three chapters work through the following topics: specialized approaches to artefact study; typology, function and style; phasing; artefact groups; classification of cultures; ethnicity; the site and settlement; time and culture change; concepts of period and phase; the characterization and archaeological visibility of events; the nature of the archaeological record; deposits and contexts; agency and material culture; comparative method and analogy; middle-range theory and research.

I have put these in the order in which they appear in the book. There are more that lie within these broad topics. This is a heady mix and a tour through many of the key debates in archaeological theory of the last century. Gavin is happy to appear to stray far from the technics of field practice into underlying issues, assumptions and implications. There are some digressions, for example on style and function and into conceptions of agency which, though sharp and thoughtful, are perhaps unnecessarily long. It is a complex and multi-stranded treatment, but, coming from an author who has spent several years in professional fieldwork after presenting a doctoral dissertation on the theory of temporality, it is one which remains consistently expert.

In spite of this complexity (it is appropriate that the assumed centrality of fieldwork should lead to comment on a diversity of matters), I can nevertheless draw out some general points.

In the discussions of objects (types, attributes), temporality (sequence, chronology, periodization, event), and contexts (stratigraphy, sites), Gavin comes back again and again to categorization. Here he challenges an idea of categorial continuity (that the same categories can apply uniformly across geography and periodization), in a critique of the idea of a discrete event and a discrete artefact, in arguing that time/space systematics are not neutral empirical frameworks for subsequent interpretation or analysis. Instead the categories upon which archaeology depends are local, strategic, and conjunctural — discontinuous. They are the result of particular interpretive decisions. What this means is that the empirical phenomena treated as a site in one field project may in another only make sense as a concentration across a regional system. A pot in the Neolithic is not, perhaps, the same as a pot in Roman Britain. Periods are not neutral. Indeed Gavin argues that there are no fundamental or primary cultural divisions in the archaeological record. His detailed discussion of stratigraphy (contrasting conceptions of geophysical deposit with archaeostratigraphic relationship) where stratigraphic units can be objects, contexts and actions/events, helps lead to the conclusion that the very distinction between objects and contexts is ambiguous and relative, that all categories from object to landscape are eventful *contexts*.

Gavin is drawing broadly upon post-processual critiques of the neutrality of temporal and spatial coordinates and interpretive or contextual archaeology (with, for example, an artefact gaining its identity from the contextual relationships explored in analysis and interpretation). He is sympathetic to critiques of the concept of site to be found in spatial archaeology and field survey since the 70s. He is well-versed in theories of archaeological stratigraphy (most notably the debates around the Harris matrix). Ultimately he notes connections with the post-colonial critique of ethnographic fieldwork made by the likes of George Marcus (in his notion of multi-sited ethnography).

The implications are considerable, I believe. Gavin ends with a sketch of an archaeology as a performative and materializing practice, rooted in particular encounters with historical conjunctures. Not recovery or discovery of the past. Not the destruction of the past (as the excavation of a site transforms and so enters the history of that very site). Not rooted in a universal technics. Not employing a supposedly neutral framework of space–time coordinates. No more than archaeologists in particular places working on what is left of the past, with the validity of their efforts dependent upon the repeatablity of their work.

The book is, in the end, very abstract. I find little vision of what good archaeological fieldwork should look like. That Gavin is not presenting a progressive model of the development of fieldwork implies that the elements of the materializing practice are immanent in archaeology's history. But most readers will find this is not enough. The references

to the importance of visualization (diagram, plan, section) and the promotion of the multiplicity of site and temporality are accompanied by no indications of how these might be represented. The book does not deal with division of labour and management structures and spectacularly evades questions of the politics of fieldwork. And perhaps most of all its notion of disciplinary history is very narrow. Archaeological fieldwork has clearly been generated out of a wide range of ideas and interests in collection, artefacts, historical temporalities and forms of culture, a range that takes us far beyond archaeology. I suggest that a creative re-evaluation of fieldwork needs to follow this dispersal, not just looking reflexively inwards, but outwards too, bursting the bounds of the discipline that has for over a century defined itself through a notion of the field as the primary locus of authentic science.

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Reading Repatriation?

Repatriation Reader: Who Owns American Indian Remains? edited by Devon A Mihesuah, 2000. Lincoln (NE): University of Nebraska Press; ISBN 0-8032-8264-8, paperback, £14.50 & US$20, 328 pp., ills.

Kathleen S. Fine-Dare

Arguably the greatest sea change in North American anthropology in the past century has been passage of the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA). While time was once measured via pre- and post-Mound Builder controversy, or pre- and post-processualism, increasing numbers of scholars are now speaking of pre- and post-NAGPRA in a manner that has moved discussion far beyond the arena of archaeology and into public debate about the nature and role of scientific practice itself under conditions of empire building, consolidation, and maintenance (see Fine-Dare 2002).

While discussion of museum holdings emerged in very sporadic fashion as early as the turn of the century, by the late 1960s repatriation had become a new focus of the multifaceted American Indian and Native Hawaiian movements. By the 1980s several states had enacted burial laws to accompany existing legislation that had emerged since 1906 to protect 'antiquities' located on state and federal lands. State-based struggles, particularly those involving the Pawnee of Kansas and Nebraska, resulted in the passage of the 1989 Museum of the American Indian Act, and the 1990 NAGPRA, which applies to the remaining federally-funded facilities.

NAGPRA requires, among other things, that these institutions must publish in the *Federal Register* an inventory of all Native American and Native Hawaiian holdings that has been prepared on the basis of consultation with potentially culturally-affiliated groups. Once publication has occurred, federally-recognized American Indian tribes and Native Hawaiian organizations may make repatriation claims on these holdings.

What some identify as the most significant piece of Native American rights legislation to have ever been passed in the United States has not gone without receiving extreme criticism from a wide range of parties directed towards concept, process, and result: What does it mean to 'repatriate' something to a 'federally-recognized, culturally-affiliated' tribe? Does not 'repatriate' signify a sovereign homeland to which alienated persons and objects may be returned? How is cultural affiliation determined when 'tribes' are largely colonial, political constructs? What about Native peoples who have not received 'federal recognition' or whose status was previously terminated? What does repatriation do to the human sciences, to national treasures, to world patrimony, to knowledge itself?

Repatriation Reader, edited by historian and Native American Studies scholar Devon A. Mihesuah (Choctaw) provides a window into these debates by reprinting fifteen articles that appeared in the early and mid-1990s when repatriation concerns dovetailed historically with the 'quincentenary' of the Columbian encounter with the New World, and by including a relatively new article by religious scholar Suzanne J. Crawford on the Kennewick Man debate. Ten of the articles originally appeared in a special issue of *American Indian Quarterly* in 1996, while five appeared earlier in *American Antiquity*, *Arizona State Law Journal* and *American Indian Culture and Research Journal*.

While much of the debate has centred on the catchy phrase 'Who Owns the Past?' and while the *Reader* itself is subtitled 'Who Owns American Indian Remains?' the issues cannot be reduced to a philosophy of history in bed with property law. This is because, as Mihesuah insists in her fine introduction to

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this collection, clear and distinct parties cannot face one another across a moral Maginot separating Natives, archaeologists, federal agencies, and museums.

Instead, Mihesuah identifies twelve kinds of dispute that turn the binary oppositions into a cross-cutting set of participants alternately at loggerheads, in collusion, and in tentative truce with one another: 1) Indians, archaeologists, and pothunters; 2) Indians and social scientists; 3) Indians and Indians; 4) social scientists and social scientists; and 5) museums and Indians. Although the book's chapters are not organized according to this scheme, Mihesuah wants to remind us at the outset, and nearly five years after most of the articles were written, that we should look for these cross-cutting complexities as we review the various issues presented within the book's four parts. The result is fairly successful, although more words from 'pothunters', museum personnel, and representatives of Native Hawaiian organizations would have closed the gap between the early-90s context of most articles and Mihesuah's late-90s update.

Part I ('History') includes two excellent articles by Robert E. Bieder and Curtis M. Hinsley Jr regarding the ways that archaeological practice is imbedded in the identity politics, imperial designs, and popular culture of nineteenth-century America. Part II ('The Current Debate') presents four diverse perspectives regarding repatriation. Robert Mallouf continues the discussions begun in Part I by exploring the concept of *querencia*, or a romanticized nostalgia of place that accompanied a 'looting plague' in twentieth-century Texas, one that ironically did not receive the amount of Indian objection that one might have anticipated.

Patricia Landau and D. Gentry Steele provide a detailed, careful account of the many reasons why continued biological work is more important than ever, not only for science, but for Native peoples. Mihesuah responds, however, with a short piece questioning the benefits of biological anthropological study:

> . . . to date, the garnered scientific information has not been used to decrease alcoholism or suicide rates, nor has it influenced legislative bodies to return tribal lands or to recognize the sad fact that Indians are still stereotyped, ridiculed, and looked upon as novelties (p. 97).

In the final article, James Riding In offers 'A Pawnee's Perspective' to the repatriation movement, based on more than three decades of activism and a reflection upon the ways that the repatriation struggles have affected other human and civil rights arenas.

Jack F. Trope and Walter R. Echo-Hawk (Pawnee) open Part III ('Legal and Ethical Issues') by reviewing the legislative history of NAGPRA and providing details regarding the implementation process. Vine Deloria Jr (Lakota) suggests that the trend towards secularization in American society has escalated into a new 'civil religion' that has encroached on American Indian religious freedom and found its way into the attitudes of federal agencies, museums, and the academy. This debate about the authority of science emerged in the pages of *American Antiquity* in 1990 when Lynne Goldstein and Keith Kintigh called for an ethical approach to reburial issues. The late Clement W. Meighan bitterly opposed their position, saying:

> If the present attacks on archaeological data were happening in engineering, medicine, or chemistry, they would not be accepted by the general public since destruction or concealment of the facts in those areas of scientific knowledge can lead to disastrous results for many living peoples (p. 193).

Anthony L. Klesert and Shirley Powell responded to Meighan a year later:

> Refusing to deal consistently or honestly with the issues and parties involved is neither right nor ethical, destroys our credibility, and will virtually guarantee that in the long run we will lose much more than bones (p. 208).

The final section of the *Repatriation Reader*, part IV: 'Studies in Resolution', looks at four individual cases. T.J. Ferguson, Roger Anyon, and the late Edmund J. Ladd (Zuni) examine the complex history of repatriation at the Pueblo of Zuni, which began in the 1970s, and has focused most intensely on the return of the stolen War Gods *(Ahayu:da)*. Ira Jacknis' piece on the repatriation of Kwakiutl artefacts considers the ways that repatriation acts are not just legal and historical, but dramaturgical. This article not only provides some insight into a non-NAGPRA-related repatriation effort (Kwakiutl territory is located in Canada), but presents a model of the ways that cultural anthropological analysis can add insight to the reasons why repatriation deeply matters to most Native peoples. Another excellent example of this kind of analysis is provided by Suzanne J. Crawford in the concluding piece to Part III, '(Re)Constructing Bodies: Semiotic Sovereignty and the Debate over Kennewick Man', written in the late 1990s. Crawford views the controversial Kennewick case — can a 9000+-year-old-skeleton found in Washington State be assigned cultural affiliation under NAGPRA? Is it not, instead, world cultural property? — as encompassing far more than the obvious legal issues related to DNA and radiocarbon analyses. Crawford asks: 'At what point does a body become common property, and who in reality is this 'common humanity' to which they refer?' (p. 217).

Kurt E. Dongoske illuminates a Hopi perspective that states that better science can be done if

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archaeologists work in faithful, ethically-grounded collaboration with Native peoples:

> The important point . . . is that the Hopi cultural advisers and the Cultural Preservation Office are willing to listen to archaeologists' and physical anthropologists' research designs that address specific problems of mutual interest to anthropologists and Hopis and then make their recommendations on the basis of information presented to them as tempered by their cultural values (p. 288).

A concluding article by Larry J. Zimmerman maintains that archaeologists should not only pay more attention to the views of Native peoples, but to the growing number of successful cultural preservation programs developed by the Navajos, Zunis, Hopis and others so that 'covenantal' kinds of relationships might be productively entered. A strong basis for such a covenantal archaeology is grounded in an array of work being conducted in the international arena, such as the World Archaeological Congress' Code of Ethics 'drafted by indigenous people in terms of how they would like archaeologists to behave rather than by archaeologists in terms of archaeologists' views of ethical obligations' (p. 301).

Zimmerman's conclusions, in many ways, summarize the main point of *The Repatriation Reader* which, in the end, does not strive to provide a 'balanced' set of positions, but instead leads towards Zimmerman's perhaps overly-optimistic suggestion that:

> Archaeologists can still be scientific but in ways meaningful to Indians by negotiating the methods and procedures to be followed and by indicating the empirical and logical components of reasoning. In other words, the science is clearly articulated and is placed fully into an explicit social context . . . As this approach becomes more commonplace, archaeological science will become more modest and very different from what it has been. It will be the end product of the syncretism begun with the reburial issue (p. 303).

That so much has been accomplished along these lines as we move further into the twenty-first century is heartening to those of us who believe that science can, in fact, be a productive magisterium of open inquiry, humble self-reflection, and place of enlightenment. For the rest of us, we'll see.

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A Balkan Trilogy

Balkan Prehistory: Exclusion, Incorporation and Identity by Douglass W. Bailey, 2000. London: Routledge. ISBN 0-415-21597-8, hardback, £60 & US$135; ISBN 0-415-21598-6, paperback, £19.99 & US$34.99, 350 pp., 42 figs.

John Chapman

Books in English about Balkan prehistory are rare birds — yet, in 2000, Routledge published two. Is this sudden interest in warring lands and emergent post-communist societies a new trend? The first concerned the phenomenon of deliberate artefact fragmentation (Chapman 2000a) and explored the same terrain as the second but from a quite specific angle. The second, reviewed here, is an interpretative study of the changes in people, places and things from the Middle Palaeolithic to the threshold of the Bronze Age, with a strong focus on the latest Mesolithic, the Neolithic and Copper Age (6500–2500 Cal. BC). In many ways, this is a book about what it meant to be 'Neolithic'. It could be claimed to be the first general book about Balkan prehistory since Ruth Tringham's (1971) synthesis *Hunters, Fishers and Farmers in Eastern Europe 6000–3000* BC.

Doug Bailey's (1996) article on figurines in an earlier *CAJ* makes one aware of the close links between his subject-matter and his own biography. In that article, the emphasis which Bailey placed on the illusory nature of social relationships based on material culture forcibly reminded me of the social relations surrounding the 'affaire Bailey' — when his archaeological colleagues could not prevent the Bulgarian authorities from arresting the author on trumped-up charges and banning him from the country for five years. Bailey is still very angry about this — witness his dramatic insult in the Acknowledgements section (p. xv) in which he calls the ministers of the Bulgarian Ministry of the Interior 'you bastards'! I am surprised that Routledge permitted publication of this insult. The 'b******' word surfaces again at the end of the book, in a story of the abandonment of a trio by their family. The use of Slavic names for all the prehistoric characters in Bailey's

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stories lends an unreal, politically dubious air of ethno-genetic continuity to the work — as if prehistoric 'Slavs' were somehow connected to Bailey's arrest. It is as well that the reader is aware of the personal baggage incorporated into the book, since the arrest was all about exclusion (from Bulgaria), incorporation (into a new research group in Romania) and identity (the author struggling to make a reputation despite this personal and professional disaster). It is hugely to Bailey's credit that he has fought his way back to produce such an intriguing book.

Bailey has developed this book from a core of material on Bulgaria and Turkey. This is the zone which he knows best and on which most attention is focused. Almost 40 per cent of the non-general references, and 80 per cent of the illustrations, concern this zone. He extends coverage to two other zones: south to northern Greece (once even reaching deep into the Peloponnese to touch Franchthi Cave!); and north and northwest to the Lower Danube, Serbia and eastern Hungary (the last-named sketchily covered, with only 8 per cent of references and no illustrations at all!). Devotees of the Cucuteni-Tripolye-Ariuşd groups or Transylvanian prehistory will find nothing about this material here, and the Hungarian stretch of the Danube cuts off Transdanubia from the narrative. We have, therefore, a selective and truncated version of Southeast Europe, in which key elements of the story are excluded — which is a pity. Nonetheless, the three zones which Bailey covers he does with, for the most part, admirable thoroughness.

The chapters are organized in chronological sequence, with an introduction to the topic, a main section on each of the three zones, a zone summary and a chapter summary. This is a helpful structure, with useful syntheses of the more detailed evidence presented for each topic and a summary of the general questions which could be addressed by different types of material. After a chapter on hunter-gatherers, Bailey devotes three chapters to the early farmers (one on settlements and buildings, another on fired clay objects and a third on burials, lithics, plants and animals); two chapters to mature farmers (this time, one on settlements, buildings and subsistence and the other on burials and objects); and a single chapter on the post-climax Copper Age before concluding with a general statement of the key themes of the book.

Like many authors writing today, Bailey takes the basic themes of local agency and long-term structure and plays the two off against each other, skilfully exploiting the tensions and their implications for social practices. He often works at a very general level, making broad comments about material culture since he often feels frustratingly unable to back up more detailed or nuanced interpretations. This is balanced by intensive use of certain key examples to provide exemplars potentially applicable to Balkan sites and regions. An example is the detailed discussion of K.D. Vitelli's study of the Neolithic pottery from the Franchthi Cave in southern Greece. Bailey suggests that it would be profitable to study early Balkan Neolithic pottery in the way in which Vitelli examined the earliest Franchthi assemblage, interpreted as small-scale production of a few vessels per annum by four or five inexperienced potters. At such moments, Bailey hits the limitations of Balkan Neolithic and Copper Age site evidence, which he realizes is rarely contextually recorded or analyzed with broader questions of social practices in mind.

Bailey seeks to explain change on three different levels — stories about local events, syntheses of the scientific data, and bigger millennial patterns. But he finds it difficult to explain long-term trends by short-term actions — a problem faced by all social archaeologists today. In my perception, it is a strength of the book that the author rarely mentions 'cultures' and 'ages' but moves freely across the terrain, linking similar practices in dramatically different places/times; some Balkan archaeologists may, however, see such chronological anarchy as a weakness of Bailey's approach. The exclusion of V. Gordon Childe's 'economic stages' on the grounds that economic stages are not a primary determinant of human behaviour is less helpful. The fact that archaeologists have underestimated the social consequences of new diets does not reduce the innovative subsistence implications of food production, nor the significance of the social (re)productive relationships underlying the new diet.

The three themes of the book's sub-title — exclusion, incorporation and identity (or projection) — operate within and between the agency–structure dialectic. Exclusion is concerned with the division of social space into distinct households and villages — the two key social institutions which emerged from Balkan prehistory. But the very places and bodies created through exclusion of some people also create spaces into which other people, food, drink and things can be incorporated. For Bailey, identities are created through symbolic practice: through the projection of the essence of things, people or places onto other places, people and things.

Using the established concept of the identity triangle of people, places and thing, Bailey divides up the narrative into three sections. In the early farming period, settlement is defined as more permanent in tell areas, more mobile in non-tell areas, with many communities living in pit huts but with a strong attachment to place and diverse material culture. In

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the mature farming phase, permanent sedentary villages develop over a much wider area, with rectangular houses the norm, maximum variation in material culture and a deep attachment to place. Finally, in the post-climax Late Copper Age, there is a general increase in settlement mobility (apart from the rare tells), with most people living in pit huts, a weak attachment to place and a reduced diversity of artefacts. What, then, of these views on people, places and things?

Bailey's comments on the way that people see themselves and change their own representations are helpful and stimulating. He is surely right to diagnose a key development in the post-6500 Cal. BC Balkans as 'an explosion in physical expression of individual and group identities' (p. 282). This ranks as one important reason for the immense quantity and enormous diversity of material remains in the Balkan Neolithic and Copper Age. However, he overlooks sex and gender, men and women (not to mention children and old people) — an odd lapse for a theoretically-informed prehistorian.

Bailey makes much of places in the landscape, echoing earlier but uncited work by several archaeologists in the 1990s. Many of the concepts are well-established in the specialist literature but one point is much disputed. Bailey emphasizes the mobile Balkan Early Neolithic — a theme developed in British Neolithic studies and recently exported from Cardiff to the Balkans. For Bailey, there is a strong contrast between the social relations of tell communities, stable and anchored in space, and those of pit hut communities, fictive, unstable and based not on place but on marriage ties. The root of this contrast lies in the differences in buildings and Bailey's emphasis on pit huts — a kind of structure that 1920s archaeologists believed was suitable for housing but which, since the LBK excavations at Köln-Lindenthal, two generations of archaeologists have rejected as residential (see Chapman 2000b). In most Balkan Neolithic sites, excavation trenches were placed on areas of high-density pottery discard — usually located above pits and therefore missing house structures (cf. the recent discovery of LBK long-houses in large-scale open-area excavations in Eastern Hungary (Raczky 1997). New sampling and excavation techniques will surely reduce the need to rely on pit huts as a residential type in future Balkan archaeology.

On objects, Bailey makes many strong points about new ways of seeing things, especially figurines, although his account is weaker on the detail of social practice. While correctly identifying a radical change in the post-6500 Cal. BC philosophy of the creation of things — with the incorporation of transformative and additive strategies to reductive techniques, Bailey ignores the third phase of deconstructive techniques, by which objects are broken up according to ways directly prefigured in their manufacture (cf. an excellent recent example using Cucuteni figurines by Gheorghiu & Budes in press). The fragmentation of especially fired clay objects is an important social practice in the Balkan Neolithic and Copper Age, with major implications for the deposition of material culture.

Overall, this book represents a valuable contribution to Balkan prehistory. There are many ways in which Bailey has clarified the relationships between people, places and things. The book production is generally excellent, although figure 4.1 relates to Chapters 5 and 6, not Chapter 4. There is, however, a small harvest of avoidable errors. The location of Majdanpek in Transylvania and the incorporation of Vlasac in the Neolithic may surprise some Serbian archaeologists; the 'two' Serbian LCA sites of Bubanj and Hum are the same (viz. Bubanj Hum); the dating of Karanovo III to the Early Neolithic pushes fashion too far; beads of 'cornelian chalcedony' at Durankulak were made of 'carnelian' *and* 'chalcedony'; Baden anthropomorphic figurines are ignored; while the use of 'Urf' ware at Franchthi (instead of 'Urfirnis') is careless. In addition to these minor points, some specialists would have the right to feel unhappy about the use of their work without citation — an unscholarly tendency which the author would do well to curb.

But this is small beer compared to the feast laid out for would-be Balkan prehistorians. Bailey set out to write a book about 'the changes in the ways in which people lived their lives' (p. 6). In this aim, he has been largely successful and deserves our congratulations and thanks. This book cannot replace Tringham's (1971) study in terms of broad time/space coverage and scholarship but it brings the new interpretative agendas of the late 1990s into productive interaction with the rich and fascinating data sets of later Balkan prehistory. This is a very valuable synthesis and required reading for undergraduates, postgraduates and specialists alike.

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Seeing is Believing: the False Privilege of Images

The Wall Paintings of Thera: Proceedings of the First International Symposium, edited by Susan Sherratt, 2000. London & Athens: The Thera Foundation; ISBN: 960-865-8020 (for 3 vol. set), softback, £125, 1011 pps., 550 ills + 23 pls.

Carl Knappett

The site of Akrotiri, often referred to as the Pompeii of the Aegean, offers a unique picture of what life was like on Thera *c*. 3500 years ago. Of the many finds discovered amidst the houses of this coastal town, overwhelmed by a vast volcanic eruption, the wall paintings are without doubt the most spectacular. Scholarly interest in these images has been enormous ever since the first ones were unearthed some thirty years ago; this immense double volume from an international symposium held in 1997 demonstrates that interest is stronger than ever. The 56 papers covering almost every conceivable angle are spread over more than 1000 glossy pages, with colour plates and numerous other illustrations generously interspersed. As with the earlier work of Doumas (1992) in which the wall paintings were published in high-quality colour, these 'companion' volumes are impeccably produced — the editor and organizing committee must be congratulated for maintaining such high standards whilst at the same time pulling so many contributions together so quickly.

It must be said that this is not an easy publication to review. Partly responsible, unsurprisingly, is its sheer scale and diversity, although the task of digesting the many contributions is very substantially alleviated by the extremely high production quality. But no, size is not the main problem. What is altogether more troublesome for the 'cognitive archaeologist' (construed in the broadest possible sense) is the underlying assumption throughout the publication that iconography represents something of a shortcut to ancient thoughts and attitudes, a shortcut that is otherwise difficult for us to find. This is presumably the attraction of the wall paintings, and indeed of ancient artworks in general; since the images appear to be rich in symbolic meaning, they must be revelatory of cultural attitudes and beliefs, providing a window into the mindset of Bronze Age Theran society. Whilst not denying the importance of the Theran wall paintings as a crucial form of archaeological evidence, I would argue that the route into the Theran *mappa mundi* provided by the frescoes is not the shortcut it is imagined to be. Further to this, I would suggest that the headlong rush towards iconography is symptomatic of our general inability to understand the meaningfulness of the more common categories of material culture, the majority of which are non-iconic and non-figurative.

Let us backtrack a little here and consider how, on the whole, archaeologists tend to deal with the relationship between artefacts on the one hand and cognition on the other. For the sake of simplicity we may take the following lines from Childe's *Piecing Together the Past* to represent a kind of 'default' archaeological approach:

> The archaeological record is constituted of the fossilised results of human *behaviour*, and it is the archaeologist's business to reconstitute that behaviour as far as he can and so to recapture the *thoughts* that behaviour expressed (1956, 1; my italics).

This perspective betrays a clear hierarchy, with thought as primary, behaviour as secondary, and material expression at the bottom of the chain; the archaeologist must work back and up from the material remains. Childe apparently believed such a progression from materials to behaviour to thoughts to be well within the realm of possibility for the archaeologist. Yet many archaeologists believe that one should go no further than reconstructing past *behaviour* from the archaeological record, a view expressed by scholars from Hawkes (1954) to Binford (1965) to Flannery & Marcus (1993). To take just the most recent of these, a programmatic statement on the remit of cognitive archaeology, it is argued that only in certain circumstances might the archaeologist aspire to the reconstruction of thoughts and be-

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liefs — when dealing with the areas of cosmology, religion, ideology and iconography. It would appear to follow that everyday artefacts, the bread and butter of most archaeology, cannot tell us about thoughts and beliefs but only about behaviour.

Within such a framework the wall paintings, falling into the category of iconography (and some would say cosmology, religion and ideology too!), take on special status. They are deemed to be uniquely communicative, while apparently more mundane artefacts are relegated as mute objects, unable to compete with the eloquence of the images. Given this discrepancy between the images and their surroundings, it may be argued that it is justifiable to lift them out of their surroundings and give them the attention they deserve. The situation is similar to that of the Linear B texts, also seen as providing a superior and privileged insight into ancient minds, those of the Mycenaeans. Indeed the richness of both wall paintings and Linear B texts is such that detailed internal analysis is not only justified but necessary. Yet ultimately both forms of evidence do need to be recontextualized. This has been happening to particular effect with the Linear B texts, which only tell us about the palatial sector of the Mycenaean economy; archaeologists are now seeking to balance out the picture by investigating the non-palatial sector too, turning to ceramic, lithic, archaeobotanical and other forms of evidence (Halstead 1992; Galaty & Parkinson 1999; Voutsaki & Killen 2000).

Thus the plea in the opening paper by Christos Doumas, director of the Akrotiri excavations, for the wall paintings to be treated first and foremost as archaeological finds, is particularly timely. His comments are aimed squarely at those scholars who have become rather too absorbed in the iconography of the wall paintings and who have indulged in over-interpretation when a careful consideration of archaeological contexts would have been in order. Treating the wall paintings as archaeological finds is a question of respecting other forms of evidence, a matter, one might say, of putting the paintings in their place. Architecture, pottery, and botanical and faunal remains can and should play a role in our attempts at investigating the Theran *Weltanschauung*. This is not to deny the significance of the wall paintings as truly remarkable finds, but much of their potency as evidence lies in their relationships with other areas of material culture (comparisons with Knossos serve to underline this point — the Knossian frescoes are largely lacking in any clear contextual associations, making even their dating problematic: cf. Immerwahr, 467–90). With this in mind, it is therefore encouraging that in this publication some papers do indeed treat the wall paintings as archaeological finds alongside other categories of evidence.

Dimitra Mylona (pp. 561–7), for example, compares the fish represented on the 'Fishermen' frescoes with the ichthyofaunal remains from the site. One fresco is of a young boy holding a catch of 12 dolphinfish — yet this species is not represented in the Akrotiri fish bone assemblage, despite good preservation and the identification of a number of other fish species. The implication that this is a special catch of a rarely eaten fish is most interesting; moreover, Mylona resists the temptation to further interpret this as a ritual scene (although some cannot resist: cf. Koehl's comments on p. 567), suggesting instead, and rather refreshingly, that 'what these frescoes evoked in the minds of their viewers was probably just "fishing"' (p. 565). One might recall here that the strong tendency to over-interpret is one of Doumas' chief bugbears; he notes (p. 17) that 'the trend inaugurated by S. Marinatos [his predecessor as excavation director] to ascribe a religious content to the Theran wall paintings willy-nilly has been followed devotedly by almost all scholars since'. One example he gives is of an image of a young female identified as a priestess, an identification which in turn led Marinatos to dub the building in which the image was found the 'Sacred House'. Although with further excavation it emerged that the painting of the young girl would have been located on a doorjamb next to a toilet facility, the label 'priestess' has proved difficult to shake off.

Other papers which promise much in their combination of iconography and archaeology are those by Palyvou, Marthari, and Trantalidou. Palyvou's paper (pp. 413–36), in which the frescoes are treated as an integral part of the architectural space within buildings, an approach aided by the incredible preservation conditions, is exemplary. She identifies two antithetical concepts of architectural space to which the frescoes are adapted. When 'mass exceeds void', that is to say when wall surfaces are barely interrupted by windows and doors, the walls are covered in fresco to create a global, panoramic effect. When, on the other hand, 'void exceeds mass', windows, doors and niches dominate, creating more the effect of a framework, matched and enhanced by the painting of separate fresco panels. Marthari, for her part (pp. 873–89), pursues another form of contextualization by turning to the abundant pottery assemblages; the rich tradition of pottery bearing pictorial images allows her to examine the interaction between the two crafts of vase painting and wall painting. Trantalidou's comparison (pp. 709–35) of the faunal assemblages with the animals depicted on the

frescoes is a potentially rich approach, but disappointingly her paper fails to deliver, with very little of the archaeozoological evidence from the site actually discussed. The papers by Beloyianni (pp. 568–79) and Panayiotakopulu (pp. 585–92) also combine iconographic with archaeological evidence, albeit in a rather restricted way and in relation to very specific questions, the former dealing with basketry and the latter with silk production.

Material from the excavations, however, is not the only means of contextualization. Specialists look to the natural world in the present to try and make sense of the paintings, and the usefulness of this approach is seen particularly in the environmental section. Economidis (pp. 555–60) identifies the species of fish depicted in the 'Little Fisherman' fresco, Coutsis (pp. 580–84) concerns himself with various representations of butterflies and dragonflies, Porter (pp. 603–30) focuses on images of certain types of flora (sea lily, crocus, iris and ivy), while Harte (pp. 681–98) turns his ornithological expertise to the thirty-five or so birds represented in the wall paintings, identifying six different species among them, the most common being the swallow. Such work is easily integrated with some of the archaeological approaches — for example, Economidis' work on fish species ties in nicely with Mylona's paper. Indeed, some scholars succeed in integrating information from iconographic, archaeological and environmental sources, such as Vlachopoulos' detailed analysis of reed motifs (pp. 631–56), and Sarpaki's investigation of various botanical species (pp. 657–80).

A third means of contextualization is through comparative iconography. Some papers that take this perspective work quite well, with Renfrew's (pp. 135–58) being typically and impressively broad in its sweep — from Lascaux to Pompeii, and from Çatalhöyük to Sigiriya (Torelli and Morris also contribute papers attempting a very broad level of comparison, but to rather less effect). At the same time he moves somewhat closer to home and examines the use of space on Middle Bronze Age pictorial pottery from the neighbouring island of Melos. Comparisons of this sort within the Bronze Age Aegean are to my mind the most useful level of comparative analysis, providing the wall paintings with both an immediate spatial and temporal context. Notable in this regard are the two papers of Hood (pp. 21–32, pp. 191–208) on the frescoes from Crete; given the widely-accepted Minoan origin of wall painting on Thera, and the fact that the vast majority of those from Thera date to a single period, his assessments of the chronology of the Knossian frescoes are invaluable. One might also note Immerwahr's useful comparison (pp. 467–90) between Thera and Knossos. But I find comparisons cast at what one might call an intermediate level, between the global and the local, to be rather less instructive. I believe the publication contains rather too much emphasis on vague parallels with the Near East and Egypt, the more detailed and pertinent analysis by the Niemeiers (pp. 763–802) of the Minoan-style frescoes from Alalakh and Kabri being an exception.

While the idea of thematic sections is a good one, and greatly helps the reader to navigate a path through so many papers, surely the sections as they stand could have been improved upon. The section entitled 'Modes of Representation' seems to overlap somewhat with 'Social Dimension', which itself seems to be something of a catch-all section, while the final section of just four papers, 'Religious or Symbolic Dimensions', appears to be an afterthought. There are also problems of balance; the first section on 'technical dimensions' is overwhelmingly about Egyptian cases that are not altogether relevant, with only two of the six papers about the Theran wall paintings themselves, and these not altogether satisfying. Another means of organizing the different sections might have been in terms of methodology, i.e. internal formal analysis; comparative analysis; and contextual (incorporating environmental, archaeological) analysis. That would, however, unfortunately necessitate the creation of a category 'speculative interpretation' for some papers to find a home. Admittedly, this would not be a particularly large section, although one must say that Doumas' continuing fear of non-contextualized approaches leading to superficial interpretations is not entirely unjustified. Ironically, it is a paper by Doumas (pp. 971–81), on the depiction of age and gender in the wall paintings, that demonstrates with particular effect how it is possible to pursue a non-contextual, internal iconographic analysis successfully; he simply provides a rigorous analysis with a clear methodology, such that any interpretation subsequently offered is built on relatively firm ground. Morgan (pp. 925–46) too shows how a careful analysis of formal meaning moves one towards an appropriate interpretative process, and away from speculative over-interpretation. The formal analysis by Birtacha & Zacharioudakis (pp. 159–72) is another good example; through a detailed examination of the contours of figures they are able to postulate that the painters may have used templates to draw curved lines. Other papers working on a similar basis seem less successful because of a less rigorous methodology — Televantou's (pp. 831–43) brave attempt to separate different styles and workshops is not wholly con-

vincing, while E. Davis' (pp. 859–72) use of attribution studies to identify individual artists seems outmoded and out of place. A number of other papers, for example those by Papageorgiou (pp. 958–70) and Gesell (pp. 947–57), seem to me to be overly in favour of interpretation at the expense of methodology.

Despite some of the criticisms that have been made here, this double volume is in itself a most impressive achievement, the result of a truly staggering amount of work by many devoted people. It will surely prove its value, predominantly to specialists in the Aegean Bronze Age, for years to come. As for the broader problems alluded to at the outset, these are by no means unique to this publication. Although there are indeed some very good papers placing the wall paintings in the context of other archaeological finds, this process does not go far enough. I would say this is symptomatic of a conceptual separation between artworks and everyday artefacts that is fairly widespread in archaeology, and indeed in anthropology (Gell 1998). If this divide is to be closed it must be approached from two directions at once. On the one hand, artworks ought to be considered as part and parcel of the material culture world, and on the other hand, 'functional' categories of artefact such as ceramics, lithics and bone ought to be considered as meaningful (art does not have a monopoly on meaning). Only then might the door be opened to truly effective integration. Provided Doumas' call for contextualization does not fall on deaf ears, Thera represents an excellent testing ground for this kind of rapprochement. Moreover, there is surely room for more dialogue on theoretical issues; such a dialogue might encourage a 'back to basics' discussion of what symbolism, meaning, and communication actually are, very grey areas I believe where material culture is concerned. And given that there is so much said about the wall paintings as a window into past thoughts, attitudes and beliefs, might there not be scope for an explicitly cognitive approach?

One might imagine that after this immense publication there cannot be all that much more to say about the wall paintings from Thera. The process of bringing the frescoes to life, however, is a long and arduous business, and there are still hundreds of metres of wall paintings awaiting conservation. This story is far from over.

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Direct Dating of Rock-art: Potential and Problems

Advances in Dating Australian Rock-markings: Papers from the First Australian Rock-Picture Dating Workshop, edited by Graeme K. Ward & Claudio Tuniz, 2000. (Occasional AURA Publication 10.) Melbourne: Australian Rock Art Research Association, Inc.; ISBN 0-9586802-1-3, £12.80 & US$26, 120 pp., ills.

Ian J. McNiven

How old is it? Dating is a fundamental dimension of archaeology and the key to chronological structuring of the past. It allows us to situate ourselves in relation to the objects people interacted with in the process of social dwelling, and provides an important yardstick for contemporary assessments of the cultural significance of sites. Rock-art is no exception to this. Take for example the Upper Palaeolithic art site of Chauvet in France. AMS dating of a pinhead of charcoal taken from an image of a bull at the cave transformed one amongst many Palaeolithic pictures into the world's oldest known painting and an influential place on the cover of *Time* magazine (Feb. 13, 1995), promoting an awareness of cultural roots and enhancing public interest in things ances-

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tral. In Portugal, direct dating of the Foz Côa petroglyphs questioned their assumed Palaeolithic age on stylistic grounds and in the process their chances of protection from dam construction (despite their scientific, but not-so-popular significance as possible Holocene art). Such is the power and significance of the expanding field of direct dating of rock-art.

Advances in Dating Australian Rock-Markings is an important, geographically-focused collection of papers on state-of-the-art techniques of what are often treated as 'direct' dating of rock pictures in Australia. Most of the papers represent a journey into the microcosm of scientific dating of rock markings (in particular paintings, engravings and bees-wax images). The volume also, however, provides important discussions of the ethics of sampling rock markings and in Australia the social implications of such work for Aboriginal traditional owners. In many ways, the volume represents modern Indigenous archaeology at its best — high-quality scientific research conducted respectfully and ethically within its broader cultural context.

This monograph is the proceedings of the 'First Australian Rock-Picture Dating Workshop' held at Lucas Heights atomic research facility in Sydney in February 1996, but the individual papers have been updated since the Workshop. The Workshop was attended by an interdisciplinary array of archaeologists, archaeometrists, analytical scientists and Indigenous custodians. Australia currently leads the world in the development of direct dating methods in rock-art; the four-year delay in publication of the Workshop results has not lessened the importance of this volume. Put simply, if you desire the latest information on rock-art dating, this monograph is a must for your bookshelf.

The monograph is divided into 5 major sections with 24 short, succinct papers. The introductory section starts with a Foreword by Michael Dodson, Chair of the Council of the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies. AIATSIS has been instrumental in the development of rock-art studies in Australia, and Dodson points out that this commitment included support for this Workshop and proceedings. As Dodson notes, rock markings are a significant part of Australia's cultural heritage, spanning the time of creation (The Dreaming) through to the time of European invasion (contact paintings) and up to the present.

Two introductory chapters by Graeme Ward and Claudio Tuniz provide an historical context for the Workshop and various chronometric techniques used in Australian rock-art studies. The uninitiated reader will find these chapters extremely useful to situate the remainder of the papers in the volume. While these chapters pull the volume together rather nicely, an opportunity was missed to internationalize the discussion to provide non-Australian readers with a better understanding of the significance of Australian dating research.

Parts 1 and 2 provide methodological overviews of the most commonly used methods in direct dating of rock markings — accelerator mass spectrometry (AMS), optically stimulated luminescence (OSL), cation-ratio and microerosion. Seven papers provide excellent and succinct introductions to each of these techniques. All have been carefully tailored for us mere mortals without a penchant for atomic physics. Alan Watchman uses a laser to 'excavate' microscopic layers (nanostratigraphy) from a two millimetre-thick rock-surface accretion from a limestone rockshelter in northern Queensland. Richard (Bert) Roberts and colleagues use OSL to date sand grains from mud wasp nests to provide minimum ages for underlying paintings in the Kimberley. Deirdre Dragovich examines the ratio of calcium and potassium to titanium in desert varnish to provide minimum dates for underlying rock engravings (cation-ratio dating). Robert Bednarik puts engravings under the microscope (in the field!) to measure the degree of microerosion to estimate the time of last engraving.

Part 3 provides a series of cases studies that highlight methodological strengths and weaknesses of direct dating using the AMS radiocarbon technique. An innovative and important study by Ridges, Davidson & Tucker looks at rock-art taphonomy in Kalkadoon territory in semi-arid NW Queensland. They show how single paint samples can contain a mixture of culturally- and naturally-derived organics of different ages. Using AMS radiocarbon determinations and rare ethnographic observations, Taçon & Garde found that so-called compositions of bees wax (resin) images in Arnhem Land may actually represent accumulations of stylistically identical images over 100s of years. A series of papers by Cole, Campbell, and David and colleagues report on AMS dates, spanning the last 30,000 years, for paintings of the vast rock-art region of southern Cape York in NE Australia. These studies reveal the longest known painting tradition in the world! From the Sydney region, McDonald shows the importance of multiple sampling of single images and how discrepancies between dates reveal potential issues of contamination. Nobbs & Moyle discuss the selection process for dating petroglyphs in the Olary district of South Australia — scene of Ronald Dorn's controversial cation-ratio dating research.

Part 4, 'Discussion and comment', contains a series of reflections on the broader context and meaning of direct dating of rock markings. In particular,

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papers tackle the problem of the destructive nature of sampling rock markings for datable materials. It opens with a short word by Ken Isaacson of the Kalkadoon people. He makes it clear that Aboriginal people must be meaningfully involved in fieldwork to ensure that 'sacred' sites are not disturbed and research results are adequately disseminated.

Claire Smith discusses the key questions of sample size and sample reliability. With the former, Smith recommends a two-phase sampling strategy — first, take tiny samples to ascertain the exact nature of datable materials and the quantities required to produce an adequate datable sample, and second, return to the field to remove appropriate-sized samples for dating. Smith also outlines one of the first investigations of rock-art site formation processes by monitoring changes in modern paintings made by a number of Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory. As with the Kalkadoon study, this is exactly the type of research required to better understand the micro-taphonomy of rock paintings and the reliability of dates.

The reliability of dates not only concerns issues of contamination, it also concerns the association between the age of dated materials and the time of rock-art production. The 'association' (or 'old charcoal') problem was illustrated recently by Bruno David and colleagues who obtained an AMS date on a charcoal drawing of 1310±460 BP from an Aboriginal site in North Queensland (David *et al.* 1999). The problem is that the drawing is a European graffito dating to the late nineteenth century! Clearly, the graffitist used an ancient piece of charcoal from the shelter floor. (Significantly, floor charcoal has been dated to the same period.) This begs the question — 'to what extent did ancient artists use pigments containing even more ancient components?'. Such vexing questions are discussed and elaborated by Robert Bednarik. He emphasizes that while tremendous technical advances will continue to increase the precision and accuracy of dates associated with rock markings, the big question for the future of rock-art dating is 'what are we dating?'. Do 'direct' dates indeed directly date the art? John Clegg suggested in his reflective paper that this issue 'turned out to be the most important revelation of the workshop'. Andrée Rosenfeld observes in her perceptive paper that this critical issue of association needs to be addressed before we accumulate too many wrong dates which unjustly deconstruct more traditional chronologies based on style. She reminds us that dates still need to be interpreted by archaeologists before they have meaning. As the relationship between date and event is fundamental to all archaeological interpretation, the volume's relevance extends well beyond rock-art studies.

The final paper of the volume, by Graeme Ward on 'Protocols for ethical research into Indigenous Australian rock-markings', discusses the 'rights' of Indigenous peoples to control research into their heritage and the implications of these 'rights' for rock-art researchers. Ward emphasizes that protocols should not be too prescriptive, as ethical research is also a negotiated *process* between researchers and individual Indigenous communities. In short, what may work with one community may not be appropriate for another.

Advances in Dating Australian Rock-Markings is a landmark volume with relevance that extends well beyond archaeometry. Not only does it point out the strengths and potentials of so-called 'direct' dating methods; it also identifies weaknesses and problems and shows how these may be overcome with site-formation studies. The monograph is reasonably priced and compulsory reading for rock-art researchers. Those interested in the epistemology of archaeological dating and the broader cultural context of researching the cultural heritage of Indigenous peoples will also find the volume useful.

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Images of Kingship

Coins and Power in Late Iron Age Britain
by J. Creighton, 2000. (New Studies in Archaeology.) Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; ISBN 0-521-77207-9 hardback, £47.50 & US$70, 249 pp., 49 figs; 22 tables

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The periods when archaeology meets written history are perhaps more prone to the fashions of interpretations than when we are dealing with pure

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archaeology or with a firm historical framework. For a period such as the Iron Age, we feel that the written sources must be telling us something, but they are written by outsiders with their own agendas, and worse, they are highly fragmented and laconic, if not totally ill-informed. Piecing together the fragments for the Late Iron Age in Britain is a classic example, with interpretations of internal warfare, invasions and political intrigue, the normal sorts of interpretations of the 'culture-history' paradigm, and it is these interpretations which still dominate in the popular or synthetic literature, for example in the introductions to books on Roman Britain. It is this approach which this book mainly attacks; the change of approach in the 1970s to a 'socio-economic' paradigm in the interpretation of coins is hardly touched upon in this book, though this study owes its origins in these approaches. Some of it might, for instance, be relevant, dealing as it did with the context in which finds are made, and so with identifying the segments of the population which would have been exposed to the use of coinage and its imagery.

This book represents a major shift in interpretation away from the traditional picture. It looks in detail at the possible meanings of the imagery on the coins, considering it from a range of different angles, with some very productive results which will form the basis of discussion for some time. For the early phases of coin production, the sources are purely archaeological and so recent changes in interpretation of the Middle Iron Age are important, notably the now general acceptance that these societies were not markedly hierarchical, and so some explanation must be found for how they were transformed from the late second century BC into a Late Iron Age society with dynastic kingdoms. Creighton sees the renewed interest in gold artefacts, which are virtually unknown in Early and Middle Iron Age Britain, as both a clear indicator of the changes taking place, but also as an integral factor in that development, providing wealth that was both portable, transferable, and capable of accumulation. He links this with the rise of a horse-riding élite, evidenced by the increased occurrence of horse bones and equipment on certain special sites such as Bury Hill (though this is a more general phenomenon on most sites of this period in Britain, and needs looking at more sceptically). Coinage is introduced in the final stages of the Middle Iron Age in the mid to late second century BC. (Creighton does not discuss the impact of the new longer chronologies for the Late Iron Age on the continent, based on dendrochronology.) He does, however, also introduce a number of other approaches, such as the importance of serial production (essential for the production and acceptance of coinage as a medium of exchange), of the shifts in the gold content and the colour of coinage, and the possible implications of the 'psychedelic' patterns on some of these early coins.

It is the conquest of southeastern Britain by Julius Caesar, however, that Creighton sees as the major turning-point in the political development, and so, also, in the nature of the coinage. Unlike most commentators he does not see the events of 55–54 BC as a brief interlude, with Britain quickly reverting to its independent status, albeit with increasing interaction with Rome and the newly-conquered provinces in Gaul and Germany. Rather he sees the establishment of client kingdoms, much like those better documented around the Mediterranean and the Black Sea, whose kings are not only allied with Rome, but may owe their power and succession to Roman support, and may even have been educated as 'hostages' in Rome itself.

Much of this he admits can only be conjecture, as the documentary evidence is ambiguous — what does the naming of British kings in sources such as the *Res gestae* of Augustus really mean? — supplicants for assistance who had been ousted from their kingdoms by political rivals as assumed by the traditional interpretations, or confirmation of continuing Roman sponsorship as Creighton would see it? Finally we can only accept one or the other interpretation on a balance of probabilities — which one fits the archaeological and numismatic sources better. The archaeology by itself is at best ambiguous, as various interpretations can explain, for instance, the presence of 'diplomatic gifts' in burials such as that at Lexden. We are thus left with the coinage, the evidence from which has increased enormously in the last 50 years, both in absolute numbers of coins and in the range of types, since Derek Allen produced his historical interpretations on which most authors have relied, and put forward the suggestion that Roman die-makers may have been involved in local British coin production.

For Creighton, as Allen before him, the major break comes around 30–20 BC with the adoption of inscriptions, initially on traditional designs, but very rapidly with an influx of new designs based on Roman types which had, somehow, to be made acceptable to a native population long-accustomed to the gradually evolving types based on the head of Apollo/chariot types of Philip of Macedon. Where Creighton deviates from Allen is that he recognizes that the types adopted are not mere copies of Roman types in circulation north of the Alps, otherwise it would have been the common types which would have been used. Rather the chosen

images are generally rare, but ones which had specific significance in the Roman context, and so may also in the British context. This peculiarity is not purely a British phenomenon, but also occurs in northern Gaul among the Treveri, and more interestingly, in Mauretania, which is well-documented as a client kingdom with close personal ties between its rulers and the leading families in Rome.

The spin-offs from this research have implications not only for Britain, but for Europe in general. For instance, Creighton's suggestion that the imported bronze vessels were more to do with cult and ritual activities than wine consumption make more sense of the continental archaeological data. Though the vessels do occur with amphorae, especially in burials, generally the pattern of deposition is somewhat different. The bronze vessels turn up in watery contexts such as the Rhine and also have a much wider distribution in northern and central Europe than the wine amphorae.

In brief, this is a book which will merit much picking over and debate. Though it is slightly marred by spelling and typographical errors, especially of proper names, it is one which could fundamentally change our view of the Late Iron Age and the beginning of Roman Britain.

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'One Out of Three Ain't Bad'

Ancestor of the West: Writing, Reasoning, and Religion in Mesopotamia, Elam, and Greece by Jean Bottéro, Clarisse Herrenschmidt & Jean-Pierre Vernant, 2000. Chicago (IL): University of Chicago Press; ISBN 0-226-06715-7, hardback, £16 & US$25, xiv + 194 pp., 12 ills.

David Brown

This book is a translation by Teresa Lavender Fagan of the *1996 L'Orient ancien et nous: L'écriture, la raison, les dieux*, and includes a short foreword by François Zabbal. It is the kind of book only the French could write, with their Gallic flair for philosophy. If that sentence didn't annoy you, then *Ancestor of the West* may be for you. If it did, however, then you experienced immediately some of what I felt while reading this book. I object *strongly* to Bottéro's form of paternalistic, post-prandial, racial generalizations such as:

> one of the essential cultural traits unique to Semites in general: a very intense religiosity as well as a sense of the extreme superiority and 'transcendence' of the gods (p. 11);

> Whenever we encounter Semites . . . we see them through their written works, most often inspired with great passion, reacting with vigor in the face of things and events, endowed with a lively imagination . . . (p. 13);

> Everything we have learned . . . indicates not only the presence of the Sumerians but also their superiority (over the Akkadians) (p. 10);

> The Mesopotamian civilization . . . was thus born . . . out of the encounter of the Sumerians . . . and the Semites . . . out of their gradual coming together, their intersecting and cross-breeding, out of their long symbiosis and their reciprocal acculturation, inspired and directed first by the Sumerians, who were already more cultivated and refined on their own, but who were also, by all appearances, more open, more active, more intelligent and clever, and more creative.

Herrenschmidt is also not free of this trait:

> The Orientals — some more than others — liked rich writing, which overflowed with meanings and signs, Westerners preferred theirs poor. The Orientals liked to be caught up in and enveloped by signs, Westerners liked to limit the signs (p. 107)

but I find no such examples in Vernant´s contribution. Given that this book is aimed not at the specialist, but at a wider audience, I shudder to think that that public will believe that such are the views generally held by those working on the ancient Near East. It is not as if Bottéro suggests that his is a personal view. In fact, quite the opposite is the case. For example, he states clearly on the issue of the concrete nature of writing on page 24 that 'this is my own opinion', leading the less expert reader to believe that the rest is established fact, or agreed by consensus. It is not, especially since the history of generalizations about 'Semites' and 'Sumerians' in Assyriology is not a happy one. I am flabbergasted that Bottéro thinks he can still come out with such rubbish, however positively expressed. The ridicu-

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lousness is exemplified by the argument he posits concerning the 'nature' of Akkadian writing. It is to him, 'stiff, without much warmth, formal . . . prosaic' (p. 14), so atypically 'Semitic', that he personally can only account for it on the basis that this (no doubt to him endearing) characteristic had been knocked out of the Akkadians by the 'superior', and by implication unemotional Sumerians. He writes: 'under the Sumerians the Mesopotamian Semites were transformed in their mental habits'. The alternative possibilities: a) that we cannot appreciate the emotional content of these works; b) that what was written or has survived does not reflect the emotional depth of its authors, I hope, barely need mentioning here. They are certainly not mentioned in *Ancestor of the West*.

I am disappointed by *Ancestor of the West*. I was favourably predisposed towards Bottéro having read his *Mesopotamia: Writing, Reasoning and the Gods* (Chicago 1992), the source of most of the ideas in his section of this book, and by his many important contributions to Assyriology. His conclusions as to the importance of Mesopotamia for modernity, with which I largely concur, and his treatments of the origin of writing, of literature, of religion and divination, with which I do not particularly disagree, are, here however, spoilt by unnecessary lapses into old-fashioned generalization. Herrenschmidt writes on a fascinating topic, namely script in the Near East and Greece, but after starting encouragingly, spins off into extravagant hypotheses, drawn from what she believes to be a fundamental relationship between logographic, syllabic, or alphabetic writing and various modes of thinking. The last 25 pages or so of the book, however, come as a total contrast to the previous 150, as the reins are handed over to Vernant. His short essay is of a different quality altogether, for the reasons I spell out below. The book looks attractive, has a few black and white photographs, two pages of notes, three pages of bibliography, and a long index. The translation, by which I mean only the quality of the English, is *in Ordnung* for Bottéro's and Vernant's contributions, but is often wayward in Herrenschmidt's part, which did not help with its comprehensibility. The newspaper reviews on the back cover are laughably inaccurate (do newspaper critics ever read books of this sort?), and Zabbal's foreword is a masterpiece of discretion. He cites Goody in a footnote, and but for that you would think from this book that no one else had published on the influence of writing on thinking and culture. His summary of the issues at stake is extremely well done, and in a few pages he successfully bridges the gap between Greek times and today.

Bottéro's 3 chapters, totalling 63 pages, open with what appears to be a modern, laudable aim: that is better to define 'our' culture in order that it may better be lived. 'Our' culture is here the 'Western' one of Christians and Muslims, to be distinguished from Chinese, Japanese, for example, and primitive cultures (p. 3). This 'super-culture' has long known that it can trace its origins to the Bible and Classical Greece, but these origins can now be pushed back further to Mesopotamia. Although not explicitly stated, Bottéro appears to wish to divide the world into two main cultures, one Muslim-Christian-Semitic-Indo-European, the other Chinese. While the aim of uniting Muslim and Christian, Semite and Indo-European by resort to their common Mesopotamian legacy is perhaps worthy, I wonder where he thinks Buddhism sits in all this. The links between China and India are perhaps far greater than those that unite Indo-European Indians and Christians. The differences between Muslims and Christians today are perhaps greater than any between Indo-Europeans and Semites in earlier times, precisely because of their common legacy of Mesopotamian religion, writing and reasoning. In other words, Mesopotamia's legacies were not necessarily good things — by which I mean they can hardly be used as the basis for unifying descendant cultures. I am thinking, of course, of how their writing provided rulers with the means to assert control over the populace, their religion as dogma, etc. Is this the common heritage that Christians and Muslims, Indo-Europeans and Semites wish to celebrate? Bottéro exhibits an overly positive and bourgeois view of culture, for it is just as reasonable to see the Mesopotamians as the promulgators of ethnic cleansing, of totalitarian regimes, of acts of ritual killing (such as in the substitute king ritual), whose writing assisted in the running of bloodthirsty empires, and whose religion extolled some of the most unpleasant virtues. Is not the democratic change wrought in Greece, as outlined by Vernant here, however flawed, a better unifying theme for this supposed 'super-culture'? And, were not religion, rationalism and writing also 'invented' in that other culture, China? What then of cultural differences?

I believe Vernant is right when on pp. 149–50 he tactfully summarizes Bottéro's contribution as revealing the presence in Mesopotamia of many aspects still characteristic of modern civilization — large, urban environments, complex societies, an organised pantheon, writing, myths responding to essential questions, and rational thinking as exemplified by cuneiform divination — and that 'certain continuities, perhaps even influences, do exist, but that it

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is essential at the same time to note differences'. I would go further and argue that the differences *within* the one supposed post-Mesopotamian society of Indo-European-Muslim-Semitic-Christians far exceed the distinctions between China, say, and it. It is rather like the observation that genetic diversity within a so-called ethnic group often exceeds that between groups. I personally find that rather comforting.

In general, I am a fan of histories with explicitly stated agendas, since the implicit agenda of 'for its own sake' produces neutral history that favours only the professional historian (see Brown 2001). As to Bottéro's central claim of introducing the Mesopotamians as 'our oldest identifiable relatives in a direct ascending line' (p. 18), I have no problem, but as to his claim consequently better to understand 'our' culture, I do.

While on the question of writing histories, another aspect of *Ancestor of the West*'s first two essays that disappointed me was their use of a rhetorical style, leading the reader by the nose from one verifying piece of evidence to the next in pursuit of the agenda, while passing over all counter-evidence in silence. This is *not* a necessary aspect of the book's popular nature, as Vernant's essay makes clear. Where comprehensiveness cannot be achieved for reasons of space, the reader is perfectly able to accept a 'perhaps', a 'probable', a 'we believe', or an 'in my opinion'. In Bottéro´s case statements such as: 'In sum, written speech alone can establish an entire tradition' (p. 24), or 'The most talented (scribes) could become truly literate men of letters, devoted to literature and living from it' (p. 32), or 'But a society exists only through and within its members' (p. 51), or 'With their (the Mesopotamian's) mania for classifying' (p. 54), are in turn untrue, hardly uncontroversial, meaningless, and old-fashioned. When so much other good work has been published on these questions by him and by others, I wonder why Bottéro has felt the need here to fob the reader off with such generalizations.

In her 78-page contribution Herrenschmidt provides us with a wide-ranging account of writing and its various forms from Iran to Greece. So far as I am able to judge, the facts as stated are correct, and a wealth of interesting information is provided. What begins, however, as an interesting summary of what is known of Elamite writing rapidly descends into a shaggy-dog story of jumbled philosophical musings about language, script, reading, and ritual. I struggled through it, wanting to learn, and indeed learning a lot, but unable to agree with most of the author's conclusions, even when I was able to understand them.

We begin at p. 69 with an outline of the evolution of writing in Sumer and Iran as made evident by finds in Uruk and Susa, and a discussion of the so-called proto-Elamite tablets found at the latter. All is well until p. 80, when Herrenschmidt begins to argue that a prerequisite for, and the purpose of, writing was to record the 'political, economic and symbolic debt' owed by a society's subjects to their ruler, and that 'multi-valent pictograms served as a mirror in which the relationships with the gods are expressed, through things and speech'.

The essay continues in Chapter 6 with alphabets, defined as 'one sign equals one sound'. It is asserted that a consonant alphabet differs from a syllabary in producing 'a field of experimentation' (p. 127), a field that is fully realized in the full Greek alphabet, where vowels are indicated. One of the author's intentions is to account for the longevity of some scripts by explaining what 'writing in itself meant for the people' (p. 91). Great play is made of the difference between scripts that reproduce what can be heard or seen (syllabaries and pictograms), and those that reproduce (in some way) the mental or physiological actions (mouth movements) needed to *produce* speech — alphabets. On this basis, Persian cuneiform with its mixture of logograms, vocalic and consonontal signs is explained as a means by which the Mazdean ritual could repeatedly be re-enacted through the process of reading (pp. 119ff.). 'A choice between the consonants and the syllable, (was) similar to the choice the Mazdeans made between the gods and the demons. Reading amounted to choosing. To choose well . . . was being Mazdean' (p. 120). 'Writing and reading in Old Persian were . . . ritual acts' (p. 121). In Chapter 8 the reincarnation of Hebrew is similarly accounted for, with any political explanation brushed aside.

> Jewish civilization, more than any other, is a civilization of writing. It has symbolically exploited the characters of the consonant Hebrew alphabet. Thus, the virtual syllable enabled a particular symbolization of word and speech, whereas the logographic tendency in turn rendered the transcendence of God visible and the alphabetic sign produced a field of experimentation in knowledge. Such were perhaps the conditions that opened the path for a renaissance of Hebrew (p. 127).
>
> It seems to me that the renaissance of modern Hebrew can be understood in strictly graphic terms (p. 135).

Chapter 8 ends with a long ode to the political importance in Athens of the aspirated *h*. Not only was I beginning to lose the thread here, but the translator clearly had become tired too, since the English be-

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comes increasingly unusual. I suspect even Herrenschmidt thought she was stretching the bounds of possibility for in a marvellous n28 she writes: 'The hypotheses expressed here are subject to caution, for I know that any research on the unconscious collective meaning of a sign is a risky undertaking'. Too right!

For Herrenschmidt, writing systems endure 'because they contain a theory of language as a medium between the visible and the invisible (gods)' (p. 126). For her, writing in the first place 'shattered the preeminence of group thought, and forced humans to redefine themselves' (p. 127) and 'the complete alphabet introduced a body-mind dualism' (p. 101). I, however, cannot accept the idea that changes in writing systems necessarily manifest fundamental changes in the relationships of its authors to the world. I am quite prepared to accept that writing influences cognition to some extent, and that different forms of writing favour, or are favoured by, different activities. I would agree that omen divination is particularly well served by the logographic/syllabic cuneiform script, for example, with the possibilities it affords for bi-lingual allusions, graphical punning and so forth. Much has been written on this in the context of celestial divination, but it must also be noted that versions of those cuneiform omens do exist in Aramaic (Greenfield & Sokoloff 1989) and perhaps even in Sanskrit (Pingree 1987). Word-play is also perfectly straightforward in alphabetic languages (full or consonontal), as the Jewish Kabbalistic tradition shows (see pp. 134ff.). Writing was not however 'the necessary terrain' (p. 109) which people needed in order to get to know their gods (what Herrenschmidt refers to as 'the invisible'). On many occasions I was able to think of counter-examples to the author's descriptions of the differences between full-alphabetic, consonontal-alphabetic, syllabic and logographic scripts. For example, silent letters in words, and the fact that certain letters are pronounced differently depending on the letters surrounding them — voiced k in key, unvoiced k in skill — show that, contrary to what is said on p. 100, reading with a complete alphabet *does* require knowledge of the language.

Vernant begins in a humble vein: 'Although my knowledge of the myths of the ancient Middle East is very superficial . . .' (p. 153), and is consequently instantly more believable. The emergence of philosophy from the backdrop of myth is discussed, and with it the *concomitant* first use of prose (p. 161). The originality of the Greeks is stressed, exemplified by 'a science that linked together a series of demonstrations based on principles and definitions that it posited, in such a way that the truth of the final proposition was completely independent of any external confirmation in the world' (pp. 161–2), but nowhere is this accounted for in terms of their script. I personally would not go so far as to say 'that thinking made a true leap here' (p. 162), but rather that this kind of thinking was favoured under the particular circumstances that prevailed in Greece at the time, and indeed Vernant urges caution against believing that 'on Greek soil, through a sort of miracle, there emerged on the one hand a philosophy . . . (of) reason, reflective intelligence and demonstration, (opposed to) on the other, religion, myth, and superstition'. He says: 'These things coexisted'.

In the final chapter of the book he stresses the relationship between Greek democracy and the institution of public debate (p. 165), wherein 'speech acquired a function and a weight that were entirely different from what they once were', and that between politics and philosophy. Vernant argues that Solon's writings on tyranny and power are reflective of the then new philosophy of Anaximander, in so far as both favoured the idea of an order, one political, the other cosmic, that *preceded* and was superior to that imposed by a king, or by a king-like-god (Zeus). This order balances competing forces (heat and cold, the rich and the poor) that periodically commit injustices to one another, but then are forced to pay the fine *poine* (p. 170). He posits further (p. 173) that for the Greeks from Homeric times, the law was king and the community held sovereignty, ending with a note that 'just as one could not invent the freedom of the citizen without at the same time inventing the servitude of the slave, one could not instil the rationality of free debate, of a critical mind, without at the same time inciting passionately contrasting speeches, thus potentially unleashing the threat of a violence that would overthrow the law and the justice that were to preserve the community from the tyranny of a power out of control'.

This essay is rather brilliant because it serves as a necessary corrective to the claims made in the previous two. I mentioned above Vernant's statement that it was essential to note differences between Greece and Mesopotamia. On p. 156 he writes that the Greece of Homer and Hesiod 'which had a type of writing system, forgot it completely and *chose* a very rich oral culture, one that would produce lyrical poetry, the epic, and even, initially, a certain number of philosophical works' — a necessary corrective against the others' assertion of the necessity of writing for certain kinds of thinking. On p. 167 he comments that 'there were not, on the one hand, Chinese farmers, and on the other Indo-European

shepherds' (as Haudricourt had asserted), and that instead the differences between Indian kings and Greek ones was far greater than that between the Indian and the Chinese. Subtly, the two-worlds distinction implied by Bottéro at the very start of the book, is undermined at the very end.

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Beyond the Individual

The Archaeology of Communities: a New World Perspective, edited by Marcello A. Canuto & Jason Yaeger, 2000. London: Routledge; ISBN 0-415-22277-X hardback, £63 & US$100; ISBN 0-415-22278-8 paperback, £19.99 & US$32.99, 288 pp., ills.

Elizabeth DeMarrais

Archaeologists have long recognized that ethnic identity, kinship, gender, class, or political affiliation constitute important social resources mobilized by agents in pursuit of their goals (Brumfiel 1992). Archaeologists employing agent-oriented perspectives have done much to document diverse experiences of individuals in the past (Hodder 1999). Yet archaeologists have been less successful in uncovering and explaining the processes that foster sentiments of solidarity, collective association, and shared interest. In *The Archaeology of Communities*, the concept of 'community' provides a focus for exploring the negotiation of group identity at distinct scales, through a wide-ranging collection of case studies from the Americas.

In their introduction, Yaeger and Canuto emphasize interaction as a critical element in community formation, a 'crucible' in which cooperative and competitive activities generate and reinforce multiple layers of identity. The authors incorporate recent interest in social practices and processes of social reproduction (Shennan 1993; Giddens 1984; Bourdieu 1977) to develop the notion of the 'socially constituted' community, viewed as an ever-changing and dynamic synthesis of competing interests. Archaeologists have long seen the community primarily in spatial terms; solidarity is an outcome of routine encounters and interdependencies. Without abandoning this definition, the editors encourage a wider perspective that encompasses the discourses that foster 'imagined communities' whose boundaries often extend well beyond the limits of a single site (Anderson 1991).

Attention to social processes by Pauketat, Mehrer, Yaeger and Preucel reveals the dynamics of community development. For Pauketat, 'politicization' and 'promotion of community' are élite-directed transactional processes undertaken in mound centres during the Mississippian period. Élites manipulated ideas about '. . . the cosmos, kinship, gender, and the domestic rhythms of everyday life' (p. 33), introducing timeless themes and traditional meanings into regional political discourse. The use of familiar symbols paved the way for gradual, if incomplete, acceptance of the new institutions of polity and hierarchy. Examining the Mississippian transition in Cahokia's rural zones, Mehrer argues that dispersed households retained considerable local autonomy despite the increased profile of a political élite in mound centres. Despite the imposition of tribute demands, the emergence of political communities did not dramatically alter the daily lives of rural constituents.

Yaeger's case study illuminates the effects of social practices at different scales within the Xunantunich polity of the Maya lowlands. Yaeger argues that notions of community were constructed simultaneously through unconscious, shared experiences of daily routine as well as through discursive *practices of affiliation* by which solidarity was actively promoted by élites. Yaeger shows, for example, that movement of individuals into the regional capital of Xunantunich created common experiences of political life. Ritual settings referenced architectural symbolism from local settlements, while other practices fostered experiences of hierarchy and exclusion.

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Other contributors explore social transformations by examining the *means* and *media* through which competing dialogues about identity were materialized. Preucel and Joyce & Hendon view landscapes and architecture as symbolic resources used in the negotiation of ideas about social order. Preucel argues that, in the American Southwest during the Pueblo Revolt and Spanish Reconquest period, the building of settlements involved '. . . interpretive acts in the public sphere' (p. 73) that expressed changing relationships between and among Pueblo villages. As part of a pan-Pueblo ethnic identity fostered by Pueblo leaders to resist the Spaniards, members of local ethnic groups were resettled in mountaintop settlements, where architecture facilitated experiences of integration and unity. At the same time, architecture was a medium for factional competition and the reassertion of traditional world views and local village identities.

Along similar lines, Joyce & Hendon argue that landscape construction provides a means for transitory experiences to be linked to more enduring principles of social memory, materializing histories of collective association. Drawing upon Connerton's (1989) work, the authors explore the 'historicizing' of community identities in two contrasting regional landscapes in pre-Hispanic Honduras. In the Cerro Palenque and Cuyamapa drainages, contrasts in the scale, centrality, and arrangements of public and ritual facilities indicate that long-term histories of community development followed markedly different trajectories.

Communities also emerge through active manipulation of portable forms of material culture. Bartlett & McAnany examine the 'coeval emergence of individualized community-based [pottery] styles' (p. 117) among Late Formative Maya communities. Pottery was used in ritual interments as part of ancestor-veneration practices and 'place-making' activities that reinforced ties between ancestors and living members of the descent group (McAnany 1995). A similar emphasis emerges in Zeidler's chapter exploring the integrative role of figurines in Early Formative Valdivia communities in Ecuador. He suggests that rituals focused upon female life-cycle events were a focal point for social reproduction centred on the kin group and its structured inequalities of gender, age, and rank.

Others build a strong case for emic approaches to community (Marcus, Hare, Horning, Isbell). Marcus surveys indigenous definitions of community in Mesoamerica to conclude that no single definition works for all ethnic groups. Aztec, Mixtec, and Zapotec people saw themselves as participating in 'networks of interaction' (p. 239) cross-cutting political, economic, ethnic, class, and language group boundaries. Under the Aztecs, the term *altepetl* referred variously to a community, town, polity, kingdom, province, or '. . . all the people under one lord' (p. 233). Marcus' arguments find empirical support in Hare's study of the discrepancies between the *altepetl* as it is represented in the documents and in the archaeological record. In Aztec schemes, urban centres received relatively little emphasis and attention focused instead upon smaller aggregates. The rural–urban distinctions emphasized by archaeologists also find little expression in Aztec world views. Adopting a minority view, Hare concludes that '. . . comparison of particular structural components and relations may be a more fruitful approach than attempting to apply the concept of "community"' (p. 95).

Horning also pursues an emic vision of Appalachian communities of the historic period, dismantling the 'cultural myth' of their 'backwardness', poverty, and isolation. She shows that individual kin groups developed diverse strategies for coping with economic uncertainty. Using historical sources and material culture inventories, Horning further demonstrates that members of mountain communities had considerable awareness of the attitudes of outsiders. Their responses were flexible, mixing resistance with active exploitation of opportunities for interaction with the outside world.

Goldstein examines the Andean *ayllu*, raising important questions about the ways that communities maintain coherence in the absence of shared territory. *Ayllu* members inhabit colonies distributed across the steep elevational zones of the Andes; reciprocal rights and obligations ensure access by all members to goods from different zones. Echoing the observations of Bartlett & McAnany, Goldstein stresses the importance of ancestor veneration and origin myths that linked groups to sacred locations. Yet genealogy, rather than territory, was the foundation of the *ayllu* community. Analysis of these patterns in archaeological traces of Tiwanaku colonies reveals a material culture repertoire strongly reminiscent of the *altiplano* homeland. Goldstein concludes (echoing Yaeger) that '. . . a strong identity with the Tiwanaku homeland . . . was evident in every aspect of the practice of daily life' (p. 202).

A real strength of this volume lies in its broad scope and comparative approach. Unsurprisingly, the case studies show that ancient communities frequently coalesced around kinship, expressed through mortuary practices and rituals, materializing descent groups and their physical presence in a territory. Because identities were forged at different scales,

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kin-group membership coexisted with local community affiliations as well as with regional political and ethnic distinctions. While identities often found expression in material culture, some practices of affiliation were inevitably more visible, persuasive, or compelling than others. While archaeologists can reasonably hope to recover these distinctions to build convincing accounts of social interaction in the past, it remains considerably more difficult to search for traces of 'imagined communities'.

Addressing this problem in a concluding commentary, Isbell asks whether archaeologists can or should assume *either* the presence of a 'natural community' formed around solidarities built up through propinquity, routines, and normative experiences *or* the existence of an 'imagined community' developed through competing discourses and contested identities. The case studies highlight 'place-making' activities (as articulated by Bartlett & McAnany) as central to community building, a conclusion echoed by Isbell, who notes that an '. . . imagined community is socially produced in discourse, [although] discourse is not independent of place, especially in the ancient world' (p. 250). Territory matters.

Isbell leaves the broader question unresolved, as perhaps he must, given accumulating evidence that both perspectives inform us in different ways about sociality and collective association in the past. Of the contributors, Pauketat, Preucel, Joyce & Hendon, and Horning are the strongest advocates of 'imagined community' approaches, and their arguments and evidence are convincing. Each shows that social actors actively reworked material culture in efforts to manipulate public sentiment, while at the same time each author confirms that tradition, history, and normative principles contributed coherence, order, and stability to public proceedings.

Reconstructing the community remains a daunting prospect for archaeologists, but this volume moves us substantially closer to that goal. The range of theoretical viewpoints represented here suggests that debate remains lively, and that there are avenues meriting further exploration. This volume will be a valuable resource in continuing efforts to understand not only how social actors shape their worlds, but also how and why their initiatives take hold, capturing public imagination to become 'binding forces' (Nadel 1967 [1935], 299, cited in Pauketat) for cooperative action.

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Hybrid Art and Science

Mark Dion Archaeology, texts by Alex Coles, Emi Fontana, Robert Williams, Jonathan Cotton & Colin Renfrew, 1999. London: Black Dog Publishing; ISBN 1-901033-91-0 paperback, £16.95 & US$29.95, 108 pp., ills.

Michael Shanks

Mark Dion is an artist trained and living in the United States. He conducts fieldwork: collecting and processing finds. He makes installations: dioramas and displays of things in museums and galleries. For over ten years his work has been exhibited internationally.

This book is about some of his work where he takes on the persona of an archaeologist. Four pieces are presented in illustrated descriptions: the History

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Trash Dig (Fribourg 1995), the History Trash Scan (Perugia 1996), Raiding Neptune's Vault (Venice Biennale 1997/8), and the Tate Thames Dig (London 1999). These and his work more generally are discussed by an archaeologist (Colin Renfrew), a museum curator (Jonathan Cotton), an art critic (Alex Coles), an art gallery director (Emi Fontana) and a fine art academic (Robert Williams).

In the History Trash Dig, Mark had removed two cubic metres of soil and debris from behind some sixteenth-century houses in the German town of Fribourg. This was taken to the Fri-Art Kunsthalle gallery, laid on the floor, examined, sorted, cleaned, numbered and placed in order upon a shelf. In Perugia the History Trash Scan comprised a surface survey and an installation presenting the processing and display of the found objects. In Venice at the Nordic Pavilion were presented items dredged from canals together with processing accoutrement (i.e. lab coat, wellingtons, magnifying glass). For the Thames Dig, Mark combed the banks for stuff, cleaned and classified in tents on the lawns of the Tate Gallery, and then presented an exhibition of the finds.

That Mark is exploring the cultural space of the archaeologist and museum curator, with their professional and disciplined practices of recovery, processing, classification and display is enough to justify the interest, albeit perhaps casual, of a professional archaeologist. Mark's work is clearly about the field sciences, the categorization and museological practices associated with natural history, geology and archaeology. His project has consistently been to explore the ways that ideas about natural history and archaeology are visualized and circulate in society.

But does he have anything to offer the archaeologist in the way of original insight?

Colin Renfrew proposes that Mark is prompting serious questions about the boundaries between science and art, that his work asks 'subtly disquieting questions' such as 'just what are we doing when we do archaeology?'. I find this the most perceptive of the essays in the book, not surprisingly perhaps, with Renfrew's intimate knowledge of both fields, art and archaeology.

Renfrew dismisses Mark's archaeological method in the Tate Thames Dig as mere 'beachcombing', but points out an historical context for the other parts of this work, that collecting and displaying are at the originary heart of archaeology (aristocratic collection and the *Wunderkammer*). He notes an artistic genealogy for Mark's work — Marcel Duchamp's revolutionary notion of 'readymades', found objects brought into the museum and displayed as valuable 'art'. Here it is not the object *per se* which matters, but the action of artist bringing found object into the specific denoted space of the gallery. The bicycle wheel in the gallery is art because it is the focus of the artist's work. Process not product is the focus of Mark's work — hence the tent on the lawn of the Tate Gallery, the explicit call to an audience to ask 'what is going on', the lab coats and cleaning gear alongside displayed artefacts. Renfrew connects this processual interest with artists such as Richard Long and Hamish Fulton who, in their rejection of the landscape genre of representing the picturesque, switch attention from the representation of space as place to a bodily engagement with land in real time event. Certainly it is clear that Mark's work is part of a broad range of twentieth-century artwork that is performative and delivers installations, gallery *mis en scènes*, assemblages of materials. And specifically Mark is exploring the archaeological interests of collection and engagement with certain aspects (material, historical, entropic) of place.

In this book, and elsewhere, Alex Coles is eager to build up an intellectual framework for Mark's work by connecting it with certain interests of the critic Walter Benjamin. In some short essays, mainly written in the 1930s, Benjamin commented upon the potentially anarchistic practices of the cultural figure of the collector. The fetishistic focus upon the particularities of the artifacts makes them ultimately unclassifiable (via the Derridean notion of the supplement).

Benjamin also celebrates Brecht's epic theatre, and Coles proposes that Mark's archaeology is epic in this sense too. In Germany in the 20s and 30s Erwin Piscator and Bertolt Brecht developed an antidramatic theatre. Rather than dependent upon a self-contained plot in an Aristotelian sense, with build-up of tension and ultimate resolution, with devices to encourage an empathetic relation between audience and performer, epic theatre intended to be more linearly narrative, subverting identification of audience with the characters of the plot, aiming to be more documentary, stimulating questions and reflection rather than empathy. So Coles calls the performative in Mark — the cleaning and classification in the Tate Thames Dig — an 'aesthetic of interruption', an epic theatre which subverts the distinction between performer and audience, does not set Mark and crew upon a stage, but draws attention to their work. 'The audience is pressed into thinking for themselves' as they look into tents on a gallery lawn and ask — just what is going on?

But is there such a separation of plot and documentary narrative/interpretation in Mark's work? Coles sees 'provocation and assault'. Maybe I am too much of an archaeologist: I find it all quite comfort-

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able in its gentle practices of beachcombing, rumaging, sorting, displaying, its personae of lab-coated scientist and museum curator.

The subtlety Renfrew finds in Mark is for me to be found first in the references to a much wider body of challenging work in the arts which deals, in its performance and assemblage, with themes of collection, classification, materiality and site or place (for example, many of the artists promoted by Charles Saatchi in the UK in the 1990s, the curatorial experiments of Peter Greenaway, many performance artists). Second, I am very taken with the element of simulation in Mark's work. In the mimesis, the mimicry of field and curatorial practices, the rearrangements and reclassifications there is a disquieting slippage from amateur to the professional (so too in the collaboration with professional specialists), from simulated to real (it is all very real). This indeed is the power of the performative. This mobilization of the figure of the simulacrum (so real it is hyper real, maybe better than the original) is what disturbs and prompts the reflexion that Coles and Renfrew rightly pick out as so valuable in Mark's projects.

I find less provoking the other essays in this book. Emi Fontana presents anecdotes about the piece presented at the Venice Biennale. Jonathan Cotton gives an account of Thames dredging work, the background to the Thames archaeological survey of 1995–99. Robert Williams describes the Tate Thames Dig.

Williams does, however, raise a crucial issue which still lies awkwardly in post-processual archaeology. In the methodological imperative to locate individual items in context, what delimits context itself? Normally archaeologists privilege chronology and stratigraphical association. The arts of assemblage, those of Mark included, find no such compulsion to be so restrictive; classification, of course, may take an infinity of forms. This too is an anarchistic component of the collector's art and science, a corollary of fetishistic particularity.

So, is there more than just passing relevance to professional archaeology? I think so. Is this just art, as opposed to the archaeologists' science? Renfrew gives the answer that in the work of Mark is explored their common ground — certain constituting energies or desires found in the projects of collection, display and a relation to place. I have been very concerned with these matters since my book *Experiencing the Past* in the early 1990s. We can see the work of Mark and many others as components of a critical reflexivity much promoted in contemporary archaeology. In the fetishization, perhaps ironic, of archaeological practice, in the play upon the simulacrum, in the awkward slippage from amateur to professional, from artist to scientist, in the common rigour and focus of attention, we can find a disturbance of our professional comfort and the security of the well-policed borders of the discipline. This kind of work is part of an argument that the archaeological is an assemblage of energies and desires, that its body of knowledge is rooted in a constituting performative experience, and this process is as important, if not more important, than the objects of the discipline. What is really going on in archaeology? Reflecting upon the work of Mark and others will prompt realization that it is not what many archaeologists believe.

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Viking State Formation in Scandinavia

Landscapes of Power, Landscapes of Conflict: State Formation in the South Scandinavian Iron Age by Tina L. Thurston, 2000. (Fundamental Issues in Archaeology.) New York (NY): Kluwer Academic/Plenum; ISBN 0-306-46302-2, hardback, £55, US$80 & 87.00Eur, xix + 325 pp. ills.

Mike Parker Pearson

This published PhD thesis is an account of changes in Scania's settlement pattern during the Viking period, using phosphate analysis to plot the extents of Viking Age village sites and rank-size analysis (developed by the 1960s New Geography) to characterize the nature of the settlement hierarchy. Together with evidence from secondary archaeological and documentary sources, this regional and locational analysis is used to explain the emergence of the Danish Viking Age state out of an earlier decentralized Germanic society. The processes of transformation are identified as being from 'corporate' to 'network' organizations, from shifting fields to permanent arable cultivation, from small, kin-based farms to larger agglomerations, from loosely-organized settlements to a hierarchy of highly-regulated ones, from a prestige goods trade to a more localized trade in staples and craft work, and from a society of fluid social

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classes to a stratified state of royalty, bureaucrats, and subjected peasantry.

The theme of the book is ostensibly an incorporation into processualist theory of concepts such as hegemony, resistance, contradiction, and human agency which were, in the 1980s, used to attack the processualist interpretation of early states as systems whose agency was cybernetic rather than human. It is, thus, an attempt to build a bridge between processual and post-processual camps, although the author's feet remain firmly on the processual side. The decision to put the word 'landscapes' in the title is very strange; 'regional' would have been much more applicable. Not only is this a regional study but its methodology employs regional analysis — there is no 'landscape' analysis or landscape archaeology in the sense of exploring past conceptions of place, space, tradition, and movement as the terms would imply for most archaeologists.

The book begins with a discussion of the study's theoretical background and an overview of pre-state Denmark from the end of the first millennium BC. This first section is heavily reliant on secondary syntheses whose speculations are sometimes repeated here as fact and whose more challengeable assertions are occasionally pronounced as incontrovertible. For example, the weapon-offering sites on Funen are assumed to have been pre-Viking territorial centres (and thereby to characterize the Germanic settlement pattern) but there is no evidence for this. For a study of social dynamics, the portrayal of the first to fourth centuries AD as a period of time devoid of significant change is not acceptable — there were profound transformations throughout Denmark around AD 200 which are entirely omitted here.

The second part of the book begins with a synthesis of secondary sources concerning Viking-Age Denmark and finishes with a rank-size analysis of settlements in different regions of Denmark from the seventh to twelfth centuries. Part III is the detailed regional study of Scania. The phosphate survey was originally carried out 70–80 years ago when the Swedish archaeologist Arrhenius discovered the correlation of village sites and phosphate concentrations. Thurston has filled in gaps where possible and has attempted to date the various sites by surface finds (where recovered) and by place-name chronology. This is a very valuable exercise although I am not convinced by Thurston's arguments that place-name forms can be precisely dated. The interpretation of village size at any one time from the spatial patterning of high phosphate values (which could have been produced over several hundreds of years) seems to me to be a somewhat inexact science. Furthermore, certain of Thurston's maps show the 'probable boundaries' of some villages differing from the limits of high phosphate recovery. Given these imprecisions at the site level, one has to question the reliability of the rank-size analysis, even before we consider whether law-like generalizations from the twentieth-century urban world on the shape and significance of the rank-size curve are really applicable to the Viking period.

This is an ingenious attempt to get useful archaeological information from phosphate distributions but it is sadly no substitute for proper site evaluation (requiring limited but systematic machine-cut trenching) or large-scale excavation to establish the spatial extent and temporal range of housing and its density. Yet such work lies beyond the resources of a graduate student and she deserves to be congratulated for producing a perfectly acceptable doctoral thesis of a standard to be published, for example, as a British Archaeological Report. Unfortunately, the title and the name of the series ('Fundamental issues in archaeology') dress it up as something which it is not.

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Phylogeny in Action

Hawaiki, Ancestral Polynesia: an Essay in Historical Anthropology, by Patrick Vinton Kirch & Roger C. Green, 2001. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; ISBN 0-521-78309-7 hardback, £47.50 & US$74.95; ISBN 0-521-78879-X paperback, £17.95 & US$27.95, 375 pp., many ills.

Peter Bellwood

Over many years, the anthropological sciences have witnessed periodic eruptions of a debate about how cultures and societies have evolved through time. One side of the debate suggests that cultures exist and that they can reveal trajectories of descent from common ancestors, and subsequent phylogenetic dif-

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ferentiation. The opposed side states that cultures have no continuous reality, being instead formed from the fairly random and continuous amalgamation of diverse antecedents, as a result of reticulative factors such as group exogamy, multilingualism, exchange and warfare.

Unfortunately, with debates such as this, opposite poles of opinion are allowed by the inherent ambiguities in the data. Imaginary straw persons, shrill protestations of self-righteousness and hunts for scapegoats can sometimes mar otherwise polite discussion. Those who favour descent can be castigated by accusations that they regard cultural variation as a series of sealed and isolated tubes, within which populations have descended through time, always uniform in race, language, and culture. Those who favour reticulation can be castigated by accusations that they portray human history as nothing more than a formless eternity of creolization and anastomosing variation, within which race, language and culture are absolutely prohibited from co-varying in any but a completely random way. I know my colleagues well enough, even those with whom I do not agree, to know that none of them *really* wish to promote such ridiculous extreme views; the wording sometimes has more bark than bite.

Of course, both these polar straw-person portrayals are worthless caricatures. We only have to examine the modern cultures of the USA and Canada, Australia, New Zealand and the UK to understand this. A purely reticulative explanation can never explain why the inhabitants of these modern nations are in large part of western European biological origin, are native speakers of English and practise some form of the Christian religion. A purely descent-based explanation cannot explain all the non-Anglo-Saxon influences and immigrations which have also permeated these nations in recent centuries, let alone of course explain the contributions of their indigenous populations. True, the clarity of a descent-based pattern will fade over time. It would be pointless (indeed laughable) to *specify* in precise percentage form what proportion of its culture modern Australia owes to nineteenth-century Britain and Ireland, as opposed to what it owes to other migrants and to its Aboriginal population.

Yet the fuzzing of phylogenetic patterns by reticulation can never help us to understand how phylogenetic patterns on a trans-cultural scale have *originated*. Reticulation, in the insistent form in which it permeates the ethnographic record, is not the only way in which the past has unfolded. New phylogenetic patterns can only be established by the periodic spreads of new populations, languages or cultural complexes. This is exactly what has happened in many parts of the world in recent centuries, and the archaeological and linguistic records suggest that human dispersal on a large scale is not something new.

And so to Polynesia, where population dispersal *did* manifestly create phylogenetic relationships. *Hawaiki*, which attempts convincingly to reconstruct Ancestral Polynesian society through comparative research, explains how a phylogenetic perspective can work on a cultural level. It does not ooze polemic and condescension like some other contemporary manifestos, yet it does dismiss rather peremptorily some of the opposing forces who insist that phylogeny does not exist in cultural history.

Kirch & Green present us with an exercise in historical anthropology, a research enterprise which they trace back to Boas, Sapir and Kroeber. Historical anthropology is:

a) *holistic* in the sense of being multidisciplinary;
b) aware of the differing historical significances of *homology* via descent, *synology* via diffusion and *analogy* through parallel adaptation; and
c) able to draw, by a process of 'triangulation', on the comparative data bases available from archaeology, comparative linguistics and comparative ethnography.

Naturally, the practical discussion of these processes in *Hawaiki* is Polynesia-focused, and it has to be admitted that Polynesia is an excellent region for the application of comparative reconstruction methods since it has a short prehistory involving only one basic founding population. There can be little doubt, at least in terms of culture and language, that Polynesian societies both prehistoric and ethnographic represent a 'phylogenetic unit', a term used in a broad non-biological sense by Kirch & Green to encompass societies which have differentiated from a common base-line.

The archaeological background to *Hawaiki* derives Polynesians from the Lapita cultural complex of Near Oceania, *c*. 1000 BC, beginning with the settlement of the islands of Western Polynesia, especially Tonga and Samoa, and then proceeding to the settlement of the Eastern Polynesian islands during the first millennium AD. During the first millennium BC, an integrated ancestral Polynesian society evolved in Western Polynesia until, by the middle of the millennium, the ancestral Pre-Polynesian language began to separate into 'innovation-linked' speech chains. It is with this rather diffuse point in time between 500 BC and AD 1, the linguistic period of the break-up of Proto-Polynesian and the archaeological period of Polynesian Plainware (post-Lapita) and

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the early aceramic cultures, that the concept of 'Ancestral Austronesian Society', and the 'Hawaiki' homeland concept so widespread in Polynesia, can be correlated.

This book therefore has two parts. Part I is a statement of methodology, as introduced above. Part II, the greater part of the book, contains reconstructions, both archaeological and lexical, of areas of Ancestral Polynesian life such as the environment, the economy, material culture, social and political organization, and religion/ritual. Careful attention is paid to resolving semantic ambiguities when they occur (as they do quite often) in the lexical reconstructions. This reconstruction section is perhaps one for Oceanic specialists to draw from, whereas Part I contains the theoretical discussion which in my view deserves to be read by all archaeologists interested in a phylogenetically-informed way of reconstructing historical anthropology.

The qualifications of the authors to take us through all their detailed reconstructions, which range from the house-society concept, land-holding corporations and chiefs; through adzes, fishhooks and food production; to gods, the calendar and even the Pleiades year, are impressive. Both Kirch & Green are foremost Polynesian archaeologists, both having also worked intensively on Lapita archaeology in the western Pacific. Kirch has two other recent books to his credit on Lapita and Oceanic prehistory (*The Lapita Peoples*, 1997, and *On the Road of the Winds*, 2000), while Green has an impressive record of the triangulatory type of reconstructive research epitomized in this book, especially in bringing the valuable data available through comparative linguistics to the attention of those archaeologists willing to listen. Roger Green was a major influence on my own thinking about Pacific prehistory when I first began research in the region in 1967, and I am pleased to see that many of his ideas have here come to fruition.

Doubtless for reasons of manageability and accessibility of data, Kirch & Green have for the most part only considered Proto-Polynesian in their lexical reconstructions (derived from a computer data base stored in the University of Auckland). Sometimes their comparative probings go back into Proto-Oceanic, but rarely any further. Hopefully, in future, detailed lexical reconstructions and archaeological records of a density equal to those now available for Polynesia will become available in the much longer-settled Austronesian regions in Island Southeast Asia. When this happens, then reconstructions of the type carried out so successfully in *Hawaiki* might be available for Austronesian prehistory going back to 5000 BP, deep into the root phases of cultural gestation prior to the successful colonization by humans of the whole of Remote Oceania.

The book does carry one salutary observation for those archaeologists who believe that only the archaeological record is licensed to reconstruct the past. Of the total material cultural inventory of Ancestral Polynesia which can be reconstructed comparatively, with lexical and semantic referents, the archaeological record can only provide useful data on about 20 per cent (p. 279). Furthermore, we are told (p. 280) that the archaeological record 'for social organization, ritual, or the calendar, . . . is to all intents and purposes mute'. Coming from two of the foremost Pacific archaeologists this may seem a little pessimistic, but I for one am certainly not too inclined to disagree.

So, for those who *do not* believe that the past is a formless creolized array of random cultural obfuscation, this is a book to read. For those who *cannot live* with the idea that cultural comparison can track any significant degree of shared ancestry through time, read elsewhere. For those, like me, who favour a middle road where the past is/was contingency-bound, the next stage of research must be to track all the differing trajectories of change to which Ancestral Polynesian society has been subjected during the past 2000 years. This surely will be a major goal of Polynesian historical anthropology in the future.

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