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Clark and Anderson opine that, “The arrival of humans in the Fiji Islands at ca. 2950-3050 cal. BP was, in historical and ecological terms, a momentous event in Pacific prehistory that nonetheless comprised only a relatively small part of the Lapita expansion in Near and Remote Oceania” (2009: 407). The significance of the initial occupation of the Fiji Islands has yet to be fully understood or explored in either a regional context, or more broadly, in terms of the archaeology of Remote Oceania. Clark and Anderson’s edited volume brings important information to this issue and helps to further understanding of the early occupation of Fiji and its descendant traditions. Moreover this book provides valuable comparative data that helps to define the role of Fijian prehistory as a part of the wider Pacific Island context.

This vast edited volume presents data and interpretations from a long-term research endeavour, *The Early Prehistory of Fiji Project* (EPF), focusing on the initial human colonisation of the Fiji Islands, the palaeoenvironment, and the cultural transformations that lead from the Lapita period to a distinctly Fijian form of social and material culture. Sixteen chapters make up this text and their authors examine aspects of the archaeological record, including palaeofauna, palaeobotanical remains, chronology and radiocarbon dates, zooarchaeology, ceramics, ceramic compositional analysis, lithics, and colonisation and culture change. The authors explore the Lapita period and beyond, until the last millennium of the Fijian prehistory, which correlates with the Sigatoka and Navatu phases in the standard Fiji pottery sequence (until c.100 BC to AD 1100). The project began in 1995 as a collaboration between the Australian National University’s (ANU) Department of Archaeology and Natural History and the Fiji Museum. Archaeological research in Fiji was aimed firstly at exploring the timing, character, dispersal and impact of Lapita occupation and secondly at the timing and causes of culture changes correlating with the Navatu phase.

The first and final chapters (by Clark and Anderson) provide detailed background on the EPF project, previous research on the archaeology of Fiji, landscape change, human colonisation and culture change. In Chapter 16, Clark and Anderson tackle the complex issue of colonisation and culture change in the early prehistory of Fiji. The authors compare and contrast the Fiji-Lapita expansion to the initial human migrations into Micronesia and East Polynesia. They argue that Lapita migrations intentionally avoided islands that were occupied, such as the main Solomon Islands.

Overall, this text provides a solid resource for background on the archaeology of the Fiji Islands, and primary data and interpretations from the EPF project. While Chapters 2-
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15 supply this basic data, several chapters are of specific importance to our understanding of the Fijian past. For example, Chapter 14 presents data from stone artefact assemblages at Natunuku, Votua, Kulu and Ugaga. This baseline technological study by Clarkson and Schmidt is significant because few lithic assemblages have been recovered from well-dated sites in the Fiji Islands. Moreover, their analysis demonstrates that a wide range of activities and technological variation occurred in the Lapita period sites.

Fiji’s faunal history has not been well-documented or explored in detail from the perspective of long-term change. Chapters 2, 3, 8, 9 and 10 make a great deal of data available and illuminate a broad temporal range of fauna, including pre-human terrestrial taxa, on Viti Levu. Chapters 2 and 3 (by Worthy and Anderson) examine palaeofaunal sites and the results of excavations. In particular the Volivoli 1 fossil site is an exciting find, as it produced abundant faunal evidence for Quaternary terrestrial animals, including a crocodilian, a tortoise, a giant iguana, a large extinct frog (Platymantis megabotoniviti), the giant megapode (Megavitiornis) and giant pigeon (Natunaornis). These taxa have a deep history in Fiji and provide examples of large terrestrial animals that run a high risk of extinction at human colonisation. Worthy has added 8 additional extinct species to the 47 historically known land birds. Prior to this research, Fiji was thought to be anomalous among large tropical Pacific Islands in the region, in terms of a lack of prehistoric extinctions. With this new data, there is no doubt that the prehistoric insular faunas were impacted by humans and the introduction of commensal species.

Human-environmental interactions are also evidenced by studies of the archaeological molluscan fauna, fish bones, birds, mammal and reptile remains. Trends in marine exploitation are interpreted to suggest that a range of collection techniques were used from the Lapita period, and beyond, which resulted in a wide diet breadth; this finding confirms patterns of marine resource use, derived from other studies across the Fiji Islands. Chapter 10 (“Bird, Mammal and Reptile Remains,” by Worthy and Clark) reports on the non-fish fauna from ten archaeological sites in Viti Levu and the Lau Group, as well as the re-analysis of avifauna from Simon Best’s work on Lakeba. The authors question the relative degree of the Lapita peoples’ dependence on transported fauna (versus economies associated with Lapita occupations to the west of Fiji), and examine the possibility of diet breadth expansion over time. It is noted that chicken, pig and dog remains do not appear with any frequency in the Fiji faunal sequence until about 1000 BP, when they occur on Lakeba (p. 425). Worthy and Clark conclude that pigs may have been introduced to west Fiji, but were not taken to east Fiji until later in time, and perhaps gained importance as the result of food stress. They speculate that native terrestrial protein sources (such as endemic reptiles and land birds), rather than introduced fauna, contributed to the diet of the initial colonising human populations. As a result, vulnerable fauna went extinct within 200-300 years after colonisation and a shift in subsistence occurred. Food stress is a theme that is repeatedly evoked not only by the authors of these chapters, but also by other researchers in order to explain shifts in settlement patterns and socio-political changes that are evidenced archaeologically in Fiji in the first millennium AD.

In sum, The Early Prehistory of Fiji is a valuable publication. Firstly, the book makes an important contribution of primary data from well-dated and carefully
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researched sites to the often-scanty existing body of information on the archaeology of Fiji. Secondly, the book is valuable as an additional comparative source of information on the archaeology of the region, specifically regarding the Lapita period and the early post-Lapita occupations. This publication is also available electronically through the ANU e-press (see website address above).


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New Directions in Archaeological Science is a collection of papers presented at the 8th Australian Archaeometry Conference in 2005. Many of these are examples of methodological innovations being developed in, or adapted to, Australasian sites, and those developed elsewhere possess appeal for archaeologists working in the region.

The research presented in the first three chapters was conducted as part of the Western New South Wales Archaeological Programme, where long-term erosion and deflated stratigraphic profiles have left the landscape a palimpsest of geological and archaeological surfaces. Holdaway, Fanning and Littleton address discrepancies between radiocarbon frequencies from heat-retainer hearths and human burials in evaluating rates of occupation. Many archaeological studies employ a single method for establishing population change and duration of use, such as feature counts or radiocarbon frequencies. The findings of this method highlight the difficulties in using artefact frequencies in surface deposits as a proxy for population, emphasising that items not intentionally interred face a greater likelihood of destruction, a likelihood that increases over time. Heat-retainer hearths are an informative feature of sites in the region and, considering the variable rates of erosion these are exposed to, proper identification of hearths is important. Fanning, Holdaway and Phillips provide a method for reducing observer error in identifying these features by using palaeomagnetics in Chapter 2, while Rhodes et al. discuss the advantages and limitations of using luminescence dating techniques on hearths in Chapter 13. Stiner’s approach to duration in Chapter 3, where he views archaeological accumulations as “persistent places” rather than permanent versus temporary occupations in spatially-defined sites, recognises that use duration is not always an archaeologically visible attribute. This distinction is important when interpreting behavioural patterns in surface deposits. While these approaches are appropriately tailored to the landscape and archaeological record of western New South Wales, their applicability to other areas, particularly those where surface deposits are a prominent feature, is clear.

Surface deposits are also addressed in Chapter 4, where Bolton applies survey and GIS methods for recording features in West Australian historic sites. This approach is favoured owing to its non-destructive nature and its ability to provide coverage of artefact concentrations to help define activity areas. The author draws a parallel