indigenous categories and terms more forward in the reader’s mind. Despite this short list of limitations, I would recommend this book for researchers interested in Niuean cultural history and seeking to understand contemporary Niuean society. The accessible language and empathetic tone opens the work to a range of readers from the more general to a specialist scholar. As an observer, Thode-Arora provides a quiet reading of the cultural context, leaving Niueans to play a central role. The key processes and topics that resonate throughout the text are migration, culture, change, legacy, continuity, transnational communities and relationships, all of which are interconnected with weaving. The last few lines of the book adequately summarises the research and the innovation of Niuean weavers: “the very essence of Niuean weaving seems to be in keen observation, experimenting and improving, until the end product has become a distinctive part of Niuean culture” (p. 266).


**CALLAN ROSS-SHEPPARD**

*University of Auckland*

Robert and Gigi York present an extensive array of archaeological evidence, ethnohistoric accounts, and observations of archaeological and museum collections to provide a wide-ranging picture of the extent and diversity of sling use in Oceania and the Americas. The volume begins with a short introduction to slings and slingstones. It is noted that as slings are usually constructed from materials that do not preserve well, there are very few slings in the archaeological record. Most of the evidence for sling use therefore, relies on the identification of sling ammunition (slingstones) and as such these artefacts provide the focus for much of the book. The authors also provide some general notes on the worldwide history of the sling and, perhaps most useful to many readers unfamiliar with these artefacts, information on identifying slingstones by form and weight. The authors then move into regional reviews of the evidence for sling use and slingstones in Oceania and the Americas, which forms the bulk of the text. The Oceanic section is divided into chapters on Micronesia, Melanesia and Polynesia (the Polynesian section also contains a small section on Madagascar), while the Americas section is divided into a chapter on South and Mesoamerica including the Caribbean, and a chapter on North America. Each of these chapters is comprised of highly detailed sections on specific island groups in the case of Oceania, and on larger geographic units for the Americas. These sections provide information on archaeologically and historically known sling and slingstone forms, historic accounts of sling use, osteological evidence of sling inflicted injuries and treatments for these injuries (notably trepanation), details of actual preserved slings and suggestions of artefact types that may be slingstones, but are not currently interpreted as such. Finally each larger regional section ends with a concluding chapter presenting themes, issues and specific questions regarding slingstone research in the areas.
The overall level of detail for the regional sections is high, however, the chapters are quite variable, with some areas receiving much more coverage than others. Throughout the text, the Yorks acknowledge this and assert that each regional section presents only the sum of the existing evidence for sling use and therefore differences in chapter length or the omission of a particular area, indicates only that there is currently a lack of information for that region. They also contend that this may be the result of a failure to publish the presence of possible slingstones or to identify them as such. In their conclusion to the Oceanic section, the Yorks note that “If we had relied on published syntheses of Pacific archaeology, we would barely be aware of the presence of slingstones – much less their significance” (p. 65). They also note that in some cases where there has been no published information on the existence of slingstones in a region, they have in fact been able to locate collections of such artefacts. The Yorks relate this scarcity of published information on slings and slingstones to one of their central themes: that slings and slingstones have not received sufficient study and are often not considered in archaeological interpretations. They assert that regarding the study of the prehistory of sling use there has been “…a pervasive disinterest in the subject by archaeologists since about 1960” (p. 5). The potential effect of this disinterest in biasing interpretations is made most clear in the chapter on North America, where the Yorks frequently provide arguments for the reinterpretation of numerous artefact types as slingstones.

The logical counterpoint that the Yorks provide to this, and their other central theme of the text, is that slings and slingstones should be receiving more attention from archaeologists, similar to that given to artefact types such as fishhooks and adzes in the Pacific and projectile points in the Americas. Throughout the book they issue repeated calls for archaeologists to consider slingstones in their interpretations and to pursue their study. They contend that such a consideration of slingstones opens up many possibilities for new research; “The questions that beg for answers, the issues to be pursued, seem almost endless…” (p. 145). They also suggest that research into sling related topics could provide valuable insight into several larger research areas. In the case of the Pacific, they suggest that studies of “…settlement of the Pacific, warfare, creation and retention of power, technology transfer …, and pre-Columbian Austronesian contacts with the Americas.”(p. 65) could all benefit from more sling related research.

The Yorks also make an effort to address and highlight several of these possible avenues of research. Of particular interest is their coverage of “Tregear’s Conundrum” (p. 51, 63-65), from Edward Tregear’s article “The Polynesian Bow”, originally published in the first volume of the *JPS* in 1892. The Conundrum refers to the question of why Polynesian societies (which the Yorks widen to Austronesian speaking societies) exhibited a preference for the sling as a weapon, when there is also evidence for the use of the bow for other purposes. The Yorks, expanding on previous suggestions of the potential advantageous functional characteristics of the sling, suggest that “The truth may lie more in cultural concepts concerning manliness…” (p. 64). They note, however, that unless the call for further study into sling use is answered, such suggestions can only be speculative. Of additional interest are several avenues of research the Yorks suggest in their concluding remarks regarding proxy evidence for
sling use in areas where slingstones have not yet been identified. These include the presence of certain kinds of armour, defensive site features and trepanation.

Robert and Gigi York provide an exceptionally detailed examination of the sling and slingstones in Oceania and the Americas. It will undoubtedly serve as an invaluable reference, especially for those students who may not have heard of, nor know how to recognise a slingstone. One can only hope that the Yorks’ aim, to challenge anthropologists to consider the role that the sling and slingstone played in past societies and to pursue the numerous research possibilities presented in this work, will be met in the near future.


TIMOTHY EARLE  
*Northwestern University*

*Calculating Chiefs* investigates the patterned variation in warfare and violence among the agricultural societies of Oceania. With a lengthy bibliography, it reviews the extensive ethnographic and historical evidence, analysing 11 ethnographic cases to compare patterns in Polynesia, the Caroline Islands and Melanesia. The book is a *tour-de-force*.

Stephen Younger is a surprising person to have written such an important book. His PhD is in Physics, he has worked in simulation and policy, and is appointed as Special Advisor to a Vice Chancellor at the University of Hawai‘i. He is an outsider to Anthropology, but, almost as the model anthropologist, he comes from outside to immerse himself in the village life of his subjects, a community of fractious anthropologists. The clarity of his review is remarkable. He summarises the relevant theories of major and less major scholars and presents a comprehensive summary of case materials, providing an exceptional review of the literature on warfare and violence. Of course, some individuals, such as Patrick Kirch or Michael Kolb, deserved fuller treatment, but the evenness of Younger’s coverage is laudable.

The book’s organisation is a model. The clear introduction justifies both the topic (human violence within an evolutionary perspective) and the appropriateness of Oceania for analysis. He provides an overview of Oceania’s geography, culture history and political organisations, a review of the existing literature on warfare and the ethnographic data, robust analyses of seven cases, a justification for the use of simulation and the construction of several simulations, concluding with an assessment of the value added by simulations. Looking systematically at the evidence, Chapter 6 draws convincing conclusions across a wide range of important topics. His scrutiny of small atoll societies is particularly significant, explaining why they should have a “participatory” (nonhierarchical) structure with little warfare. He also concludes that the frequencies of interpersonal violence and warfare are correlated, both