focusing in on the lives and desires of these hula performers. This quibble aside, *Aloha America*, with a brief but useful glossary of Ōlelo Hawai‘i words and English equivalents, is ideal for undergraduate courses on gender, tourism, colonialism and ethnic relation, and histories of the U.S., Hawaii and the Pacific, or, because of its ample use of oral histories, ethnographic field notes and archival documents, graduate courses on ethnographic research methods. Overall, *Aloha America* is an excellent example of how scholars can use oral histories to examine the archival past and salvage stories, experiences and histories that are seemingly forgotten, silenced or otherwise marginalised.


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As a result of numerous cultural resource management and academic projects, archaeologists have now developed a large dataset to interpret Hawaiian prehistory. A result of this proliferation of archaeology over the past four decades is the need for synthesis. This book continues Patrick Kirch’s efforts to do just that. Of interest to Kirch in this synthesis is the development of the only “pristine state” encountered by Europeans during the historic period. He argues that Hawai‘i represents a model system to evaluate endogamous political development, and to understand a political system that was unique in terms of structure and complexity in Polynesia. By tracing the development of Hawaiian society from its ancestral roots in Southeast Asia to encounters with James Cook at Kealakekua, Kirch identifies cultural patterns and presents theoretical ideas of culture change. He argues that the interaction of long- and short-term processes, termed ultimate and proximate causes, results in the society described at European contact. This society, according to Kirch, is best described as an archaic state, the development of which “was a remarkable replay of the histories of other societies in similarly favourable conditions throughout both the Old World and the New” (pp. 289).

Given Kirch’s experience throughout the Pacific, he is uniquely able to create a cohesive story spanning over 3000 years and the entire Pacific Ocean. He begins the book in a prologue recounting the impetus for its writing, describing European accounts of Hawaiian society, and briefly equating the society to other comparable political systems across the globe. He then turns to a discussion of personal experience, a technique continually and effectively used throughout the book, to bring the reader into the mindset of the modern-day archaeologist musing about the past. Such returns to his experiences illustrate the process of archaeological enquiry to both an audience familiar with the practice and interested in this particular situation, and an audience relatively unfamiliar with the discipline.
Part One begins to detail the extraordinary colonisation process that commenced in Island Southeast Asia and ends with the settlement of East Polynesia and Hawai‘i. This discussion revolves initially around the Lapita Cultural Complex before turning to description of Ancestral Polynesian Society from which all East Polynesian cultures putatively developed. It is this culture that Kirch compares to Hawaiian culture as a way of identifying change. Part One ends with a fictitious, but engaging, narrative of voyaging between the Marquesas and Hawai‘i, followed by a useful synthesis of the history of archaeology in the Pacific, intertwined with personal field stories. Though no one knows exactly how colonisation events occurred, the fictitious narrative usefully illustrates the great lengths to which populations went in their regional explorations, and introduces a world view that is likely foreign to many readers. The general synthesis is valuable as it summarises a great deal of information in an accessible way, though it presents one of several alternative scenarios. (For some of these consult: Addison and Matisoo-Smith 2010, Rethinking Polynesian origins: A West-Polynesia Triple-I model, in *Archaeology in Oceania* 45: 1-12; Terrell 1989, Commentary: What Lapita is and what Lapita isn’t, in *Antiquity* 63: 623-26; and Terrell 2003, Archaeological inference and ethnographic analogies: Rethinking the “Lapita Cultural Complex”, in *Archaeological Papers of the American Anthropological Association* 13: 69-76.)

The next section explores the development of Hawaiian society using a mix of evidence from archaeology, ethnography and indigenous accounts. Kirch places emphasis on the role of people in the modification of their landscape. After colonisation, the landscape began to change as a consequence of cultural actions, agriculture most notably, as well as rapid breeding and expansion of the Pacific rat presumably brought from the Marquesas. Kirch reflects on how these changes were associated with Hawaiian political development, exploring the evolving economic system in particular. He ends the second section by detailing the altered land tenure system that made Hawai‘i unique in Polynesia and its impacts on the development of the political system. This changing system removed kinship connections between commoners and elites, grouping the commoner populations according to locality and low-level familial relations. This was a fundamental difference from all other Polynesian societies and its implications are described later in the book (pp. 221-24). It is this that makes Hawai‘i similar to archaic states throughout the world.

The final section and epilogue are where the reader will find novel academic arguments, along with a description of the final few hundred years before historic contact. Kirch returns to his ideas of ultimate and proximate causation in describing culture change that he first outlined in his 2010 book, *How Chiefs Became Kings*. Kirch argues for multi-causation and states that it is the interaction of human decision-making, population growth, environmental change and contingencies that results in change leading to unique historical trajectories. These causes are couched in terms of a proximate-ultimate dichotomy, in which ultimate causes are seen as long-term processes (evolutionary) while proximate causes are those closer to the point of change (functional) (p. 227). Many of the ultimate causes that Kirch outlines are natural processes like population growth and environmental change (p. 228). Proximate causes, on the other hand, consist of human actions such as status rivalry and ideology (pp. 229, 297).
I am not sure that the proximate-ultimate dichotomy is necessary to illustrate the narrative of culture change sketched by Kirch. Human decisions and innovations—agency—can accumulate, sometimes over centuries and millennia, to change culture. Such decisions can change selective pressures, constrain development and provide opportunities. The process of human agency is intertwined with other external and internal processes. Because of how intertwined these internal (i.e., agency) and external (i.e., population growth and environmental change) processes are, and because both human agency and what are called ultimate causes have long- and short-term effects, I am uncertain whether this dichotomy adds to our understanding of Hawaiian culture change. It may be more useful to examine the political system as one of several interacting complex cultural systems. In such a view factors described as both ultimate and proximate interact in positive feedback loops to constantly create change. In any case, Kirch captures the complexity and intricacies of culture change well in his narrative.

This book is one of the best on Pacific prehistory in recent years and has recently won the 2013 Society for American Archaeology “Popular Book Award”. The topic, which is interesting in its own right, is masterfully presented by Kirch and his analysis of the Hawaiian case is a significant work of scholarship. Though I would recommend the academic reader search for original published material on various topics in the book, referred to by Kirch and conveniently listed at the end of the book, the narrative is well worth the read and the arguments provided at the end are compelling. While Kirch has published prolifically over his long career, I am confident that this publication will endure as one of his best. The book should be a mainstay on the shelves of all students, Pacific anthropologists, and those interested in the development of socio-political systems in any area of the world.


**ERICA NEWMAN**

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Lansdown has produced a book that provides the reader with European observations of the Pacific, including their disdains, appreciations and desires. This book is exactly what the title claims; it is about strangers in the South Seas and what their thoughts were of the Pacific. There is no pretence within this book of understanding the indigenous peoples of the Pacific, which is refreshing. The excerpts that Lansdown has selected allow the reader to experience the adventures of these strangers through their own words.

The introduction of this book gives an excellent broad overview of the Pacific. Lansdown has described the origins and settlement by the indigenous peoples and follows on with the European expansion and later colonisation. This is executed very