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This is another important addition to the Lapita literature. Arising from a research forum focussing on Lapita decoration, the volume presents an eclectic range of papers, from a brilliant review of the settling of Remote Oceania, to an insightful deconstruction of the Eastern Lapita Province, with plenty in-between to prehistoric links between the Solomon Islands and Papua, a review of Lapita vessel forms from Mussau, and another from a number of assemblages, an update on the archaeology of the Isle of Pines, and an intriguing comparison between secondary burials of Vanuatu, Island Southeast Asia (ISEA) and Taiwan.

The introductory chapter by the editors is an overview of Lapita, a history of discoveries and a background to the development of the ceramic database developed by Chiu. This is an excellent history of Lapita, although there are a couple of points that need clarification. First, it is noted that Golson defined the term “Lapitoid” by a synthesis of data on dentate decoration. In fact “Lapitoid” was defined by Golson to include the non-dentate wares from the assemblages. His concept of Lapitoid went beyond decorative techniques and included other morphological characteristics. There is more to Lapita than dentate stamping.
Secondly, the editors make the point that apart from New Caledonia there were only a few excavations in Island Melanesia during the 1990s and “no attempt was made at achieving a global synthesis of the data” (p. 15). In fact this decade provided much fieldwork and data for regional and wider syntheses. From New Britain and New Ireland alone the 1990s account for excavations in Amalut, Adwe, Apalo, and Maklo in the Arawe Island group by Gosden; Apugi off the coast of Kandrian by Specht; Gasmata by Lilley; Torrence in numerous sites on Garua Island, New Britain; Malekolen, Balbalankin, Kur Kur and Kamgot in the Anir Island Group by myself; and the Duke of York excavations by White and Gosden. I have not included the Solomon Islands by Sheppard and Walter here. The results of these excavations allowed comparisons of Lapita dentate decoration with other assemblages from within the Lapita universe with the realisation that the syntheses of the 1960s to 1980s using Lapita Provinces were limited. The construction of a new synthesis including Early, Middle and Late Lapita periods allowed the identification of temporal trends, regional differences notwithstanding.

The chapters that follow are exemplary investigations of their topics with major advances in our knowledge of Pacific archaeology. I will address each paper in turn. Bedford presents an excellent, well-balanced review of Lapita exploration and colonisation of Remote Oceania. Topics covered included Lapita origins, colonisation, chronology, subsistence, environmental impacts and change over time. The next chapter by Kirch and colleagues presents an initial classification of vessel forms from Mussau, Papua New Guinea. This allows comparisons with the published Arawe assemblages from southwest New Britain. One difference is seen in non-dentate pottery. Kirch and colleagues argue that there was a change from dentate to plain/other decorated vessels over time. Similar changes are seen in other Lapita assemblages, although this difference between dentate (non-utilitarian/ritual pottery) and non-dentate (utilitarian vessels) is seen from within Early Lapita as well and not just in later sites. Perhaps it is a situation with dentate dropping out and the other wares continuing. The illustrations in this chapter are superb! I look forward to the final publication on this important assemblage, which is crucial in interpreting Early Lapita.

Sheppard and colleagues offer a stimulating paper arguing for interaction between Lapita communities in the Solomons and those in Papua—what they call a Solomon Sea Interaction sphere. A lot rests on similarities in the age of zircon inclusions (Middle Miocene) found in pottery from New Georgia and from the geology of Woodlark Island. Yet, similar-aged zircons are found from Manus (Hugh Davies, pers. comm.) and indeed connections already exist between these two areas with the presence of Lou Island obsidian in these Solomon sites. Notwithstanding this, I think they are spot on with Solomon Sea interactions. This paper is a major advance in the modelling of past interactions.

Valentin and colleagues present a fascinating and thorough comparison between Taiwanese jar burials, those from Island Southeast Asian (ISEA) sites, and Teouma in Vanuatu. Jar burials similar in age to Teouma are uncommon in ISEA except Taiwan, which is geographically speaking in East Asia. Jar burials from ISEA are mostly Metal Period in age, although Neolithic ones are known. Of importance is their point that jar burials are only one funerary practice “inscribed in a wider mortuary scheme at Teouma and in ISEA sites…and is a…complex funerary scheme that was part of
the Austronesian package” (p. 98). In short, this paper links the Teouma jar burials with those in Asia, and an additional argument for this based on skeletal morphology is presented in Valentin et al. (2015).

Lagarde and Outecho provide a regional update on the archaeology of the Isle of Pines based primarily on their excavation of rockshelter KTT006. This is a good article fitting the Isle of Pines into the regional picture and ideas about exchange mechanisms. The absence of Puen ware is significant and reminds us that social and economic exchange is not uniform across this southern area of New Caledonia.

Sand presents an excellent review of Lapita pottery forms from the southwest Pacific. It is a thorough and well written comparison of Lapita vessels. Having a single individual undertake this task has its strengths in that we have a uniform approach. Sand provides an objective and balanced review of the assemblages and literature. I thoroughly agree that Lapita is more than just a push from west to east, as Sand highlights. As I noted years ago with the monograph Lapita Interaction (Summerhayes 2000), the movement of Lapita was one of continual interactions between groups.

Another important aspect that Sand examines is technology. Sand says the Lapita vessels were slab constructed, and while this is true for the thicker dentate stamped pots and jars and stands, some non-dentate jars and pots used other forming techniques. Functional variation is at play here.

And now to the eastern boundary of Lapita—what was called the Eastern Lapita Province. Burley and LeBlanc’s chapter debunks the concept of the Eastern Lapita. They argue that Fiji has closer connections to the west and is separate from Lau and Tonga to the east. This is not the first paper that criticises the concept of the Eastern Lapita Province, but it is one based on local sequences. They argue that research over the last two decades has produced a larger database which allows distinction of finer patterns and divergences in interaction between Fiji, Tonga and Samoa. Each year new sites are found in Tonga and Fiji which necessitates a re-examination of models for exchange and interaction. I expect more change with more work. Chiu’s chapter called “Where do we go from here? Social relatedness reflected by motif analysis” provides a sobering perspective as to what these motifs tell us about social relatedness through the heuristic device of “house societies”. Others have referred to cultural groups, clans or whatever. She talks about interaction between potters and motif similarity. This is the core of what we do. What does the study of decoration tell archaeologists about these societies? Her paper discusses preliminary results of motif analysis from 57 sites (4452 motifs have been recorded) using the Lapita Pottery online database. After years of painstaking work, Chiu has achieved something of an order that we never expected.

In the chapter she outlines a rough picture of why motifs were shared or not shared between communities, notwithstanding sampling and chronological issues. Chiu says that potters from different island groups knew what other potters were doing and “they chose to avoid motifs from the same subcategory” (p. 198). Also noting that there was more variability in motifs in New Guinea and less so in New Caledonia is important. Peoples, clans and house communities settled in the Bismarck Archipelago and stayed for close to a millennium. Some of these communities or houses, but not all, moved into Remote Oceania and continued to interact with their
mother communities. It is thus not expected that all clan or house designs would have been transferred to areas to the east if not all the houses went, and also one would expect these houses to develop and diversify their own motifs as well. Can we assume that motif transmission is by house-clan-family transmission, and diversification is within respective families? Chiu’s work on this is breaking new ground, including one motif interpreted as leaving New Guinea and migrating to Tonga. Here there is an emphasis on ownership of motifs by corporate groups. Note that if we go beyond just dentate designs and bring in production data as well (i.e., highly mobile groups) then we have powerful tools for future work in unravelling the past.

The last chapter is by Barbara Mills. Mills was brought into the workshop by Chiu to discuss her successful research into Social Network Analysis with GIS based in the Southwest US. Many of her ideas are important and will add food for thought.

This book is a polished product written by leading archaeologists working in the Pacific. It is beautifully produced with excellent illustrations. The editors should be congratulated.

References


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Ngāti Pūkenga have a wealth of stirring whakataukī ‘proverbs’ in their oral storehouse, yet it is the literal meaning of the word pūkenga that seems most fitting here. To be skilled, to be well versed in, a repository of knowledge and expertise, all aptly describe the career and contributions of pre-eminent scholar and worthy descendant of Pūkenga, M.P.K. Sorrenson. *Ko te Whenua te Utu—Land is the Price* assembles thirteen of Sorrenson’s influential essays on Māori history, land and politics published between 1956 and 2011. A complete works this is not. Missing are his essays on Africa written for academic and activist audiences (the same could be said of his Māori material), his publication on the Polynesian Society and his extended discussions from *Na To Hoa Aroha*. A compendium of his African essays might provide a lively companion to this volume.

The collection is bookended by two additional chapters: a good humoured introduction provides some context of the author and the essays, and offers insights into