

# australian ARCHAEOLOGY

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# australian ARCHAEOLOGY

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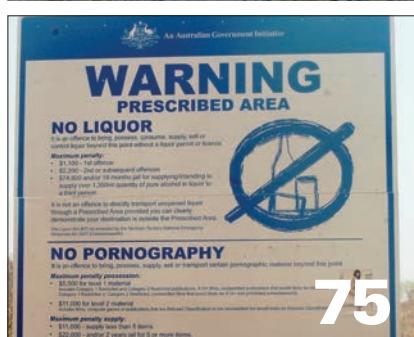
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French. The author is of course of US origin and knows his most likely audience is probably not going to want to be reminded of their own dark past!

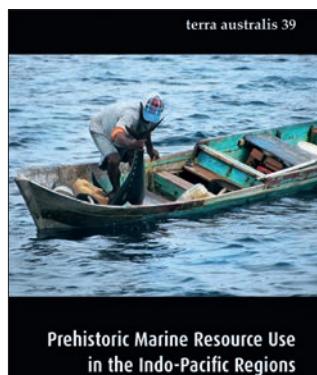
All that said, there is some very good popular science writing here about Pacific archaeology. If the author had remained focused on that topic and left out the travelogue and embarrassingly naïve and ethnocentric judgments on Pacific ways of life, this would have become a very impressive project. To me, the book shows that a good science writer could put together a better up-to-date summary of the state-of-the-art in Pacific archaeology than a practising archaeologist; but we still await that science writer.

## **Prehistoric Marine Resource Use in the Indo-Pacific Regions** edited by Rintaro Ono, Alex Morrison and David Addison

2013. *Terra Australis* 39. Canberra: Pandanus Press, x + 204 pp., ISBN 978-1-92502-125-7 (print version), ISBN 978-1-92502-126-4 (online version).

*Reviewed by Mirani Litster*

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Discussions surrounding human impacts on marine ecosystems have often been limited to the post-industrial era, when changing technologies enabled the large-scale acquisition of marine resources. The archaeological discipline, with its capacity to examine trends to a greater time-depth, provides older evidence

for such discussions. Archaeological studies into marine resources also provide information about cultural uses of such resources beyond known contemporary and historical examples, whilst ethno-ecological studies deliver insight into contemporary exploitations.

The recent addition to the *Terra Australis* series, entitled *Prehistoric Marine Resource Use in the Indo-Pacific Regions*, examines such exploitations across the Indo-Pacific region within a human ecology framework. This regional focus extends from the North Pacific (San Miguel Island), to insular South East Asia and east Africa (the Mafia Archipelago). Edited by Ono, Morrison and Addison, nine of the 11 contributions derive from a conference session entitled 'Historical Ecology and Marine Resource use in the Indo-Pacific Region', held at the 19<sup>th</sup> Indo-Pacific Prehistory Association Congress in Hanoi, Vietnam, in 2009. The volume is divided into four sections, partitioned largely according to temporal case studies and thematic categories, and within each section a range of methodological and analytical issues are presented.

The first section of this volume contains five contributions detailing prehistoric and historical marine resource use. Chapter One by Olmo discusses the analysis of fish bones from middens in Guam. He highlights issues associated with the lack of information below family level and concludes by suggesting that the use of modern fisheries data may resolve some of these problems. The second chapter by Amesbury discusses pelagic fishing in the Marianas, from the period of initial colonisation through to recent times. Amesbury points out that the initial colonisers were skilled at acquiring open-ocean species, which is supported by archaeological remains of dolphinfish (*Coryphaena hippurus*) and marlin found in prehistoric period contexts. Amesbury then discusses recent changes in Chamorro fishing practices, including a brief hiatus in pelagic fishing during the 18<sup>th</sup> century Spanish period, and the introduction of more boats in the 1950s which enabled the Chamorro to reinstate open-ocean fishing practices. The third chapter, authored by Ono and Addison, examines the archaeological record of Tokelau, specifically the presence of marine resources dating from initial colonisation. They discuss the contemporary and prehistoric sourcing of both inshore and pelagic fish species, with archaeological results used in concert with the ethno-ecological record to highlight the possibility of long-standing marine conservation measures. With a focus on San Miguel Island, the fourth offering from Braje, Erlandson and Rick examines historical maritime resource use in the North Pacific. Through a comparison of datasets ranging from the early Holocene through to contemporary times, the authors propose that an apparent abundance and size increase of red abalone (*Haliotis rufescens*) was attained through human predation on local sea otter populations. This information provides important insights into human impact and is the basis for the authors suggesting that abalone fisheries would be sustainable with both a recovered red abalone population and a controlled sea otter population. The final paper in the opening section, authored by Christie, is the only contribution addressing Indian Ocean marine resource extraction. Christie discusses maritime exploitation and its social context on the east African coast during the 12<sup>th</sup>–18<sup>th</sup> centuries by examining faunal assemblages from Juani Island. She suggests that status was a causal factor in differential patterns of archaeological faunal remains; areas associated with lower status groups revealed a relatively higher presence of marine fauna when compared to higher status areas, suggesting that low status groups supplemented their diet through marine resource procurement. Christie concludes by arguing that the social context of maritime exploitation can be better understood through the examination of faunal remains within spatial frameworks.

Case studies associated with specific marine resource use are presented within the second section of the volume. The presence and significance of baler shell (*Melo* sp.) at Neolithic and metal age sites in the Philippines is examined by Vitales. Baler shells have been extensively exploited throughout the Indo-Pacific, including Australia, but the 'richest' evidence for their use emerges from the Philippines, with 30 recorded sites yielding *Melo* sp. remains. Vitales concludes that these shells were selectively exploited during the Neolithic and Metal Ages for artefact production, often for 'scoop forms' of objects. Such shells have also been found in many burial contexts, highlighting their social significance. The next chapter by Osamu presents a cultural history of dolphinfish fishing in Japan, east Asia and the Pacific. Osamu highlights

that Japanese exploitation appears to be the oldest at 11,000 years BP, with dolphinfish remains also having been found in later archaeological deposits in Guam, Taiwan and the Philippines. The paper examines shifts in dolphinfish consumption patterns, indicating how it has more recently acquired a lower prestige status, despite a high social significance during the Edo Period.

The third section presents two discussions of material culture associated with marine exploitation in the western Pacific. The first, by Goto, examines a 'hybridised marine exploitation culture' in the Bonin and Hachijo-jima Islands. Goto presents several examples, including the use of the single outrigger canoe which was introduced to the Bonin from Hawaii in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. He examines a range of modifications, including hull building, which eventually incorporated Japanese cedar and boat-nails. He concludes by stating that these examples of 'technological integration' are not a result of diffusion, but of agency. This paper is paired with an ethno-ecological study conducted in the Mactan Islands, Philippines, by Tsuji, who examines the ecological and environmental impacts of moray eel capture through the use of bamboo basket traps (*bantak*). Tsuji concludes that further work is required documenting details on fishermen's strategies for trapping grounds, as well as a greater focus on the management of moray supply.

The edited volume closes with contributions discussing modern marine resource use. Suda presents changing subsistence activities in Oceania following the arrival of Europeans, and highlights the impact of modernisation and globalisation resulting in a focus on commercial fishing in lieu of traditional subsistence fishing in Ha'ano village, Tonga. Suda argues that, despite impacts not being noticeable thus far, attention must be paid to the possible deleterious outcomes of resources shifting beyond the immediate village area. Segi presents the final paper, exploring territoriality over traditional fishing areas on Cebu Island in the Philippines. He highlights the importance of further research into informal territoriality over designated fishing grounds and emphasises the deployment of feasible and sustainable strategies of co-management between authorities and fishermen.

The editors of this volume were faced with the challenge of connecting a set of topically wide ranging case studies within a geographically expansive region. The papers present varied data sets from prehistoric, historical and modern contexts, and the chronological and thematic organisation of these case studies provides clarity and cohesion. Owing to the wide scope of material, however, the volume has under-represented certain geographical areas, such as the Indian Ocean, with a disproportionate focus on island South East Asia and the Pacific. Additionally, despite a well-established practice of mollusc procurement and use in the region, a focus on vertebrate marine fauna is pronounced, with only two studies specifically dealing with shell. To my mind, the stand out papers are those by Christie, who examines status and differential resource patterning in the archaeological record in east Africa and Braje et al.'s examination of red abalone, sea otters and kelp forest ecosystems. This paper effectively illustrates the significant role that archaeology can play in providing insight into future sustainability plans.

In summary, *Prehistoric Marine Resource Use in the Indo-Pacific Regions* offers readers a range of data associated with marine resource use in the Indo-Pacific from varied

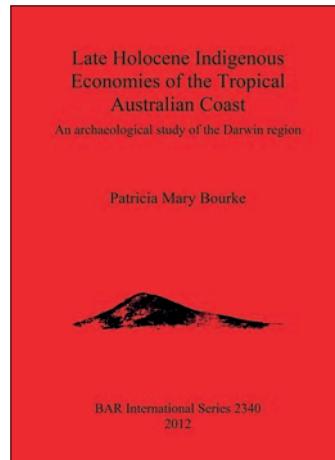
temporal contexts. The volume is successful in highlighting the relevance of a human ecology framework and the use of different methodological approaches to gain insight into past and present marine resource use and management.

## **Late Holocene Indigenous Economies of the Tropical Australian Coast: An Archaeological Study of the Darwin Region by Patricia M. Bourke**

2012. BAR International Series 2340. Archaeopress, Oxford, 202 pp. ISBN 978-1-40730-923-1 (pbk).

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Data-rich, detailed site reports are never going to appeal to the general public, but they are the essential building blocks of local archaeologies, without which regional, continental and global syntheses cannot exist. It is unfortunate that university presses in general are turning away from being organs delivering basic knowledge to academic communities, and seeking to

establish themselves more often as producers of academically informed, but not necessarily academic, books. In the present instance, this monograph is the published version of a PhD thesis submitted in 2000. The British Archaeological Reports (BAR) series provides a good service in publishing such works, although it does have a certain reputation for unrefereed and unedited editions—useful, indeed essential, but not necessarily elegant offerings. Bourke's volume typically provides basic archaeological information, informed by not just detailed analysis but also thoughtful interpretations, but it would have benefitted from a heavier editorial hand.

The subject matter is Bourke's survey and excavation of sites in the region of Darwin in northern Australia, mostly shell 'middens' of one sort or another, which are aged within the last 2000 or so years. Some of these are of the large mounded kind, better known perhaps from the eastern coast. The basic data sets are sites on Middle Arm, a peninsula within Darwin Harbour, and around the adjacent embayment, Hope Inlet.

In the introduction, Bourke provides a snappy account of previous research (p.1), then muddies the waters with a far-too-detailed paragraph on *Anadara* (which might be considered the protagonist of her thesis), that would have