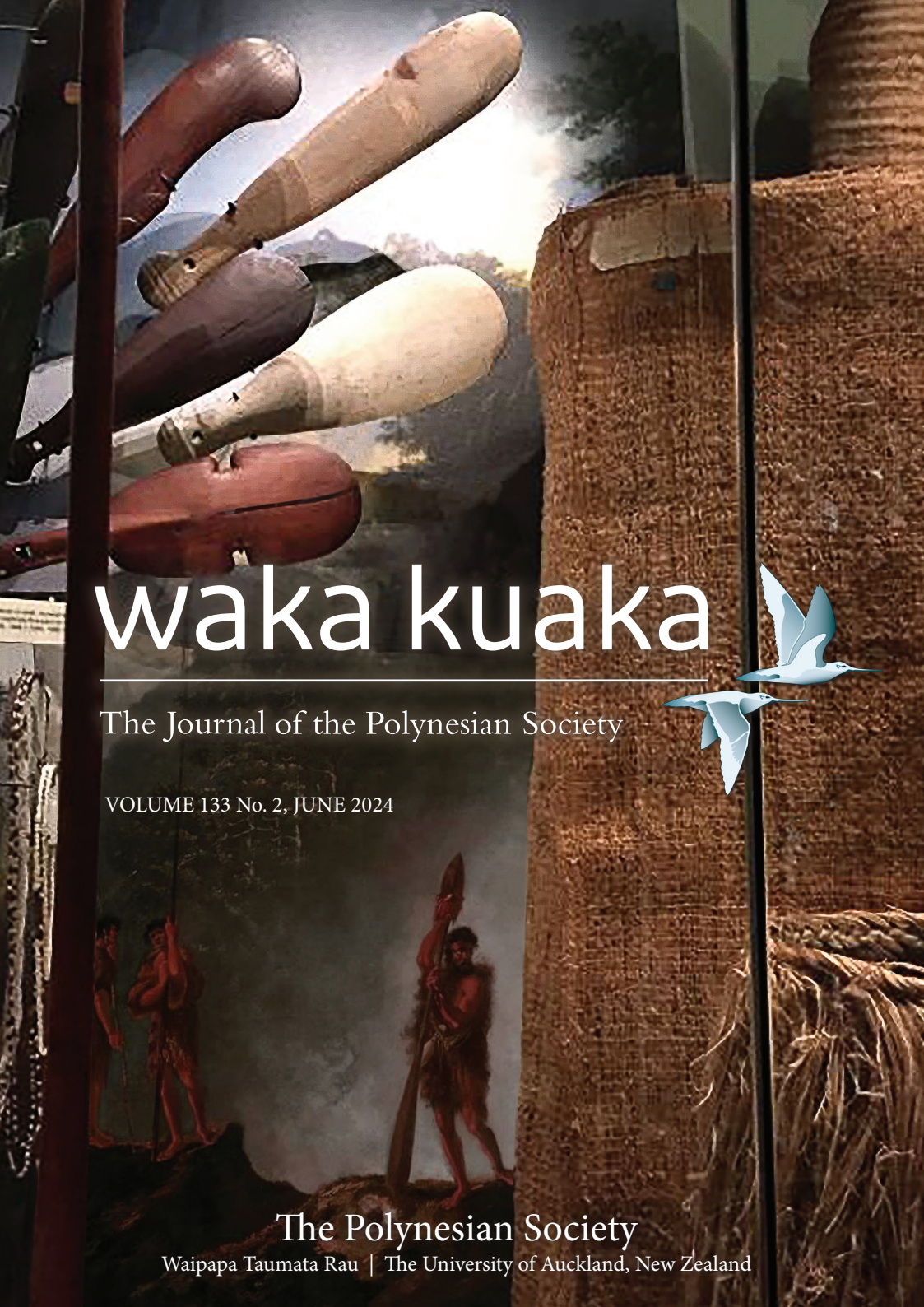




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REVIEWS

HOWES, Hilary, Tristen Jones and Matthew Spriggs (eds): *Uncovering Pacific Pasts: Histories of Archaeology in Oceania*. Pacific Series. Canberra: ANU Press, 2022. 577 pp., abbr., append., contribs., figs., index, institutions. AU\$110.00 (softcover).

DEIRDRE HARRISON

Tāmaki Paenga Hira | Auckland War Memorial Museum

This book, in its own words, is a “collection of essays” focusing on the “biographies” (p. 1) of the objects and individuals highlighted in the international exhibition *Uncovering Pacific Pasts: Histories of Archaeology in Oceania*. The exhibition opened in March 2020 simultaneously in 38 participating institutions based in Europe (including the United Kingdom), North and South America, Australia and collecting institutions from across the Pacific.¹ These institutions displayed both well-known and lesser-known Pacific material stored in museums and other institutions around the world.

The exhibition was the culmination of the Collective Biography of Archaeology in the Pacific (CBAP), an Australian Research Council (ARC) funded Laureate research programme based at The Australian National University in Canberra and led by Matthew Spriggs. Spriggs, Jones and Howes² are the three editors of this volume, contributing both chapters and editorial commentary, alongside chapters from 31 other academic or curatorial archaeology professionals associated with one or more of the institutions where the objects are located.

There is already a considerable body of archaeological and anthropological literature on the various cultures of the Pacific, built up over the last few centuries of contact with European visitors, settlers, colonisers and researchers. This book, however, attempts a different approach to synthesising information from this vast region.

The artefacts considered are mostly stone or wooden tools and ceramic objects, but also include documents (chapters 4, 11), pictures/paintings (chapter 6) and linguistics/oral traditions (chapter 7). The discussion is not limited to the artefacts themselves and their originating cultures but also provides additional reflection on what these objects can tell of contemporary collecting ideologies or the individual perspectives of the collectors. Each chapter is based on an object or collector/researcher and is well illustrated with images of the objects discussed and contemporary photographs or sketches. The chapters are arranged into four defined chronological periods to illustrate the “ideological roots of modern archaeology” (p. 2) and its development in

the Pacific region. The commentary by the editor(s) at the beginning of each section provides a (sometimes lengthy) overview of sociopolitical events in the region and the world for context to the Pacific archaeology story. The four sections track the development of archaeological and anthropological enquiry from early exploration and the search for the origins of the Indigenous people to the establishment of a professional scientific field with highly trained practitioners in multiple technical specialties.

Several chapters reference the same events, locations or historical figures, providing an interesting variation in perspective and giving the reader some insights into the people behind the research and an indication of the networks which existed (or not) between contemporary researchers (e.g., Schmidt and Skinner, chapters 22 and 23), as well as some idea of the links and changes through time (e.g., Haast to Skinner to Duff in New Zealand, pp. 404–5). The scholarship, passion and individual focus of the authors of each chapter are a notable feature and contribute to the variety and readability of the book.

The book also uses the current locations of the objects in international institutions to address their histories and their cultural significance to both the culture of origin and the cultures which collected them. The contrast between the collecting practices and priorities of the different European powers is examined by including (translated) research conducted in French (chapter 4), German (chapter 8) and Russian (chapter 5), as well as the English (and American) which makes up the bulk of the work.

The main goals of the exhibition, as stated by Matthew Spriggs, were to construct a “new historiography of Pacific archaeology” (p. 8) to uncover (i) forgotten influences and contributions (in particular by women and Indigenous scholars), (ii) neglected early excavations and (iii) the linked histories of archaeology and anthropology. These goals are clearly achieved. There are several additional themes running through the volume. One of these is the editors’ advocacy for the “reimagining and reinterpreting” (pp. 550–56) of objects and archives by cultural custodians as well as archaeologists and anthropologists using newer technologies and theoretical frameworks.

The widespread international exhibition of these Pacific objects, while consistent with the authors’ hope of encouraging future scholarship, would seem to restrict access to many, including the communities from which the objects originated—particularly as it coincided with the unfortunate timing of a global pandemic and international lockdowns. This book and the exhibition website (www.uncoveringpacificpasts.org) are intended to address that obstacle by providing free access to the information and good-quality illustrations.³

As mentioned in the introduction (p. 8), not all themes or specialties can be represented in one volume. Despite the omission of an examination of the value of DNA studies, particularly given its application to an important

focus of archaeology in this region—that of origins and migrations—this volume does cover a wide range of analytical techniques, information sources, artefact types, geographic regions and chronological span.

This well-selected array of essays has certainly fuelled my interest, and I think this book would be of interest to Pacific researchers in many disciplines. It also emphasises the significance of archaeological collections in museums and other institutions and the varied nature of the information they carry; as such it would also be of interest to museum professionals.

Notes

1. For a full list of participating institutions and authors please see the exhibition website: www.uncoveringpacificpasts.org
2. Emeritus Professor Matthew Spriggs is a retired professor of archaeology from The Australian National University, still active in research. Dr Tristen Jones is a lecturer in the Master of Museum and Heritage Studies programme at the University of Sydney, Australia. Dr Hilary Howes is an ARC DECRA fellow based at The Australian National University.
3. The book and many images may be downloaded for free from ANU Press: <https://press.anu.edu.au/publications/series/pacific/uncovering-pacific-pasts>

<https://doi.org/10.15286/jps.133.2.251-253>

SISSONS, Jeffrey: *The Forgotten Prophet: Tāmāti Te Ito and His Kaingārara Movement*. Wellington: Bridget Williams Books, 2023. 204 pp., ack., ed. note, foreword, illus., index, notes. NZ \$49.99 (softcover), EPUB, PDF.

ROWAN LIGHT

Tāmaki Paenga Hira | Auckland War Memorial Museum
Waipapa Taumata Rau | The University of Auckland

Jeffrey Sissons's *The Forgotten Prophet* is a quiet, sturdy kind of history which deserves careful reading. The book's titular prophet is Tāmāti Te Ito Ngāmoke, born in 1829 of Ngāti Ruanui and Te Āti Awa descent. Te Ito's early life was entwined with the seismic histories of Taranaki hapū (smaller descent groups) who, forced out of their rohe (district) in the 1820s, returned with the Wesleyan Gospel after 1840 to struggle with newly introduced diseases and feuds with other Māori groups in the face of demands for land by settlers and the colonial government. Taranaki was a "spiritually dangerous landscape" (p. 17)—one that was not only "being slashed by survey lines that brought social division" but scattered with the bones and bloodstains of those killed during tribal conflicts a decade earlier.

In this context, Te Ito emerged as a young tohunga (expert), improvising an established custom of expelling ngārara (atua—ancestor deities—embodied