

*Hawaiki, Ancestral Polynesia. An Essay in Historical Anthropology* by Patrick Winton Kirch and Roger C. Green. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press 2001. 375 pp. ISBN 0 521 7839.

In recent decades the historical and comparative research in the languages of Oceania has expanded considerably linguistics and its main centers are Australia, New Zealand and America (esp. Hawaii). Its qualitative advance may be attributed at least partly to the multidisciplinary approach of its protagonists who do not view anthropological and archaeological data as irrelevant for historical and comparative research in the field of linguistics. Within this methodological framework linguistics may be said not only to describe, but also to explain. This turn toward cognitive issues and multidisciplinary may be observed in many studies and books dealing with the Pacific. One of them is *Hawaiki, Ancestral Polynesia (An Essay in Historical Anthropology)* prepared by Patrick Winton Kirch and Roger C. Green and published in 2001 in Cambridge University Press.

In the Preface the authors underline the universality of their anthropological education, interests, and research in quite a few Polynesian societies and their inclination to a comprehensive investigation of historical processes in Polynesia. Of course, attempts to restrict history to the era reflected in written documents or inscriptions were rejected a long time ago. The occasional tension between linguistic data obtained through etymology and semantic methods on the one hand and archaeological data on the other is sometimes undeniable; it is not easy to judge the ethnic and/or linguistic affiliation of an ancient society from archaeological data in a territory open to invasions and migrations. From this point of view Polynesia is in an advantageous position and linguistic data may help us to reconstruct extralinguistic phenomena.

The term *Hawaiki* ranks among those Polynesian words that are relatively well known outside the fairly narrow circle of Polynesian scholars and maybe that is why the authors have chosen it for the title of their joint work. In fact, they have launched a quest for the discovery of what is shared by all Polynesians – not only by those in the East for whom *Hawaiki* probably was in the West Polynesia as indicated by the westernmost toponym *Savai'i* in the archipelago of Samoa. Their publication is meant as a summary of what we know of the ancestral Polynesian phase or world irrespective of its geographical location and name.

Their method is derived from comparative historical linguistics endeavouring to reconstruct the proto-language and to explain changes that have occurred after the original unity disintegrated into a number of daughter languages. The so-called phylogenetic model is relatively easy to apply to a fairly restricted set of communities sharing – in addition to language – similar physical, social and cultural features for which we may assume a common origin while the subsequent changes have resulted from the need of adaptation. Interference with other ethnic units may also be included in the adaptation, but it has played no significant role in (at least East) Polynesia. A brief instructive characteristics of the phylogenetic model and its application to Polynesia is described on pp. 13–16. Kirch and Green trace their model to A. K. Romney's paper published in 1957 being aware, however, that he had predecessors as early as the 19th century. In Kirch and Green's *Hawaiki* linguistics is not merely a model of comparison but the acquired linguistic data (cognates, etc.) are of relevance for their decision making.

In the introductory chapters the theoretical principles and methodological procedures for correlating linguistic and archaeological evidence are explained. In Chapter 3, the arguments supporting the definition of Polynesia as a clear-cut phylogenetic unit are discussed.

The establishment of the particular daughter communities is not viewed only in terms of their initial separation; subsequent contacts upon the parallel level (i.e. with other

geographically not too distant daughter communities) are considered probable, although much less so contacts with the homeland community. Such contacts may have been due to chance voyages of individuals or to more massive events that deserve to be termed intrusions or invasions (p. 33). Another issue of interest in this respect is the whereabouts of the homeland of the daughter languages. It is often linked to the greatest genetic diversity of a region. Here a question arises whether the considerable internal diversity within the Marquesas is to be ascribed to a relatively long-term diversification (when voyaging between the islands within the archipelago was not too common) or if it may be taken as an indication of the fact that the diversification of the local dialects is due to the role of the Marquesas as an early center of migrations within East Polynesia.

The plausibility of results achieved by Kirch and Green is increased by the requirement that "the subdisciplines of historical linguistics, archaeology, comparative ethnology, and biological anthropology independently contribute their data and assessments to the common objective of historical reconstruction" (p. 42). This procedure is metaphorically labeled *the triangulation method* by the authors. Parallel application data from several (sub)disciplines to the reconstruction of past phases is known from other areas – for example from Indo-European studies. In the field of Austronesian studies repeated attempts have been made for example by A. Pawley, M. Ross, M. Osmond and others to investigate semantic fields and to use them for explaining the cultural history of the communities concerned.

In fact Kirch and Green proceed to their goal of reconstructing the Polynesian homeland from two directions – from the present to the past (by comparing the modern languages and culture within Polynesia) but also (chiefly thanks to archaeology and to comparison of Polynesia with other parts of Oceania) they perceive this reconstructed phase as a result of what had been taking place before. In other words, they proceed from the earlier past to the more recent past (Chapter 3, pp. 53-91). In this chapter, the authors are weighing up the role of isolation and distance and are inclined to reject too pessimistic an attitude (pp. 83-89).

In Part II titled *Rediscovering Hawaiki* although they are aware that the aspect of constructing is inevitably present in such an endeavour. And the preference was given to *rediscovering* because their aim was not to hide their intentions.

In the subsequent chapters Kirch and Green concentrate upon the analysis of a series of semantic fields relevant for the reconstruction of the ancestral Polynesia. First of them is the physical environment (see p. 103) followed by subsistence, food preparation and cuisine, material culture, social and political organization, gods, ancestors, seasons, and rituals astronomical phenomena, weather, directionals (p. 104), etc. In each instance an inventory of reconstructed Proto-Polynesian words is listed including their cognates in the modern languages with glosses and sources.

The conclusions proposed by the authors are plausible and not surprising. Their attempt at a reconstruction of Hawaiki is a kind of extension of ethnography into the past without being a simple projection of the present into the past. Despite their generally small size the Polynesian communities and their organization are far from simple and we are reminded that two millennia ago the ancestral communities were extremely tiny (p. 282). At the same time we should be aware that there was a good deal of variety in all respects (including dialectal differentiation) and flexibility was one of the vital presuppositions of efficient evolution and purposeful adaptation to new environmental conditions.

The publication is supplied with abundant notes (pp. 285-312), a glossary (pp. 313-316), a bibliography (pp. 317-355), and two indices including Proto-Polynesian reconstructions (pp. 356-375). Kirch and Green have no doubt added a most interesting work to the fundamental library of Polynesian studies.

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