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## Editorial

We are approaching the 350th year in the publishing of scholarly journals. One of the first, the *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society* (London) began in March 1665 just as a severe epidemic of bubonic plague began to take hold. The two events were coincident yet in an odd way also linked for it was precisely the irrational basis of so much assumed cause-and-effect – according to Daniel Defoe in his vivid, but second-hand *Journal of a Plague Year etc.*, desperate Londoners burnt coal fires in the streets, drank ‘plague water’ and jumped into the Thames in attempts to mitigate the effects of illness – that was the central theme of newly-emergent scientific method. To that, the institution of journals added refereeing or peer review of submitted papers, which began in 1665, regular, public disclosure of research results and critical debate. Those remain the operational fundamentals of scholarly journals to the present, including of *JPA*.

Opening this issue is a survey of Pacific tattoo tools in which a widely-assumed link between tattooing and Lapita dentate-stamping on pottery is debated. While the author, Wal Ambrose, has confined himself to the particular proposition, it is one of many that bear on broader issues about the sources, timing and nature of Oceanic colonization. Amongst those is a long and ongoing debate about the extent to which the tight knot binding Austronesian dispersal to movement out of Taiwan might need to be loosened, reworked or even untied. Another, is the extent to which prehistoric settlement upon central and eastern Pacific islands occurred only by movement from west to east. This, too, is a venerable debate, the extremity of views represented, on the one hand, by Thor Heyerdahl’s hypothesis of Amerindian colonization of Polynesia, and on the other hand, by Roger Green’s advocacy of Polynesian return visits to South America (and by cognate arguments in relation to North America).

The latter has been the orthodox position for many years now, but for a long time I have had some regard for

aspects of the former. In 1959, during a season of picking apricots in central Otago, I read *American Indians in the Pacific*, but if that was influential, some might say infectious, it has been reinforced by a longstanding conviction that comprehensive understanding of the prehistory of Oceanic colonization will not be achieved by focusing so largely upon what we know so well already. That a relatively narrow channel of dispersal in the western Pacific was used by Lapita and later colonists is well-demonstrated, but by making all remote Oceanic prehistory heir to that inheritance by default, through failing to continue testing propositions involving additional sources, times and routes (eastward on northern and southern westerlies, and along an equatorial route; southward from East Asia and westward on tropical easterlies from South America), leaves us, at least, uninformed about the real strength of our preference.

The hypothesis that some Amerindian settlement occurred in eastern Polynesia (e.g. in A. Anderson, K. Green & F. Leach (eds), 2007, *Vastly Ingenious*. University of Otago Press, pp. 117–134) is, I think, a case worth investigating anew, by all relevant means of modern archaeological science. That the hypothesis was widely rejected fifty years ago is no reason to assume that revisiting it would only continue to show that it remains without merit. Re-assessment of older or less favoured models of colonization, or indeed of any other topic in Pacific prehistory, helps us to avoid an intellectual monoculturalism that constrains the thinking of a small scholarly community such as ours.

This is my last issue as Editor of *JPA*. It was agreed at the beginning, in late 2008, that I would lead the establishment and editing of the journal for three years and then hand over the tiller. The new Editor will be Tim Thomas, formerly Assistant Editor. I thank Tim especially, and also Nigel, Les, Louise and the members of the Editorial Board for the strong support they have provided and look forward to the continuing progress of *JPA* under Tim’s direction.

*Atholl Anderson*

