Reanalysis of the E. W. Gifford Collections,  
Hearst Museum of Anthropology  
by Patrick V. Kirch

A continuing, long-term OAL project is reanalysis of the Oceanic archaeological collections obtained by Prof. Edward W. Gifford of the University of California, during his three pioneering expeditions from 1947-56, and curated in the Phoebe A. Hearst Museum of Anthropology. Beginning with his excavations on the island of Viti Levu, Fiji, in 1947, Gifford reinvigorated the field of Pacific prehistory by using stratigraphic excavation methods to demonstrate that long-term cultural change could be ascertained in the Pacific Islands. On his next expedition, to New Caledonia in 1952, Gifford discovered the type site of Lapita at Koné, and excavated a number of other post-Lapita sites as well. His final expedition, in 1956, was to the island of Yap in Micronesia.

Gifford was not only a pioneering fieldworker, but a careful museum scientist, and his extensive collections from these excavations (more than 40,000 cataloged lots) have been curated in the Phoebe A. Hearst Museum of Anthropology at Berkeley. Although Gifford published excellent monographs on the results of each of his expeditions, advances in method and theory since Gifford's days now allow for significant new interpretations of these collections.


Publications:


1997 P. V. Kirch, M. I. Weisler, and E. Casella, Editors, Towards a Prehistory of the Koné Region, New Caledonia: A Reanalysis of the Pioneering Archaeological Excavations of E. W. Gifford, Kroeber Anthropological Society Papers, Vol. 82, Special Edition. Berkeley. [vi + 153 pp., 11 figs., 60 tables] (If you are interested in obtaining a copy of this publication, please contact the Kroeber Anthropological Society, c/o Department of Anthropology, University of California at Berkeley, Berkeley, CA 94720)