
*Alice B. Kehoe*, University of Wisconsin - Milwaukee

Kerns, of the College of William and Mary (Williamsburg, VA, USA), has written an ethnography of American anthropology by chronicling the life and work of one of its eminent twentieth-century practitioners, Julian Steward (1902–1972). Her book has considerable relevance to archaeology, not only because Steward dabbled in archaeology early in his career and used archaeological data to create his ‘Cultural Causality and Law’ (1949), expanded into his 1955 *Theory of Culture Change*. His development of the concept of cultural ecology, the focus of all his work, is basic to contemporary archaeology, and his postulate of the primordial patrilineal band bedevils us yet. Kerns tells us that Steward encountered great difficulty in ‘selling’ the concept of cultural ecology; she shows how it differs from Kroeber’s cultural areas, and that Kroeber did not like Steward’s concept. A fascinating and historically important component of Kerns’ book is her attention to the career aspects of Steward’s work, how Kroeber counseled him on career strategy; how his first marriage to a fellow academic imperiled his career and his second, to an adoring helpmate, advantaged him; how his friendship with Duncan Strong influenced him, both in working up cultural ecology (Strong had considerable background in ecology) and in career moves. Kerns is also sensitive to the near invisibility of women in Steward’s thinking, whether acknowledging his first wife’s collaboration, or using Indian women as informants, or recognizing women colleagues, or realizing that his data on women’s major roles in Basin-Plateau subsistence invalidate his postulate of patrilineal bands with male dominance as the primitive form of human society.

Steward carried out archaeological survey and testing of Puebloan sites in western Utah, along the Colorado River in the Glen Canyon area, in California around Santa Barbara, along the Columbia River at the Dalles, and excavated Promontory and Black Rock Caves in Utah. Ethnography interested him far more. Kerns highlights his disinterest in religion and ritual, which, combined with his lack of interest in women’s work – he collected baskets for museums but not the craft – let him look upon Paiutes and Shoshones as among the simplest of human groups, with ‘low,’ ‘primitive’ technology. In Kerns’ view, Steward was deeply marked by his adolescent years in the unique Deep Valley School, where boys from upper-middle-class families spent half days working on the ranch on the eastern slope of the California Sierras, as well as obtaining a prep-school education. The ranch used irrigation, and Steward’s familiarity with near-by Owens Valley before and after Los Angeles took all its water, and with Mormon irrigation in Utah, led him to emphasize irrigation as the casual factor in the development of early civilization.

Kerns claims (page 274) that Steward’s use of the term ‘multilineal evolution’ in his 1955 Theory book reflected an assignment by Kroeber to prepare a paper on cultural evolution for the 1952 Wenner-Gren *Anthropology Today* symposium and publication. Steward wanted to distinguish what he considered valid evolutionary concepts from nineteenth-century
‘unilinear evolutionists’ such as Leslie White and Gordon Childe. Steward apparently thought he had introduced his term, although Kerns finds both Wittfogel and Lowie had used it previously. She sees it as ironic that Steward received more recognition for that concept than for cultural ecology, considering it was cultural ecology he was deeply committed to proselytizing. Her discussion of this apex of Steward’s career is particularly illuminating for mid-twentieth-century archaeology.