



NEW ZEALAND
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NEW ZEALAND ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER



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A NOTE ON FUTURE STRATEGY AND TACTICS

by P. Gathercole

The most significant outcome of the Christchurch Conference was the perspective offered to New Zealand Archaeology by the papers of Green Parker, summarised elsewhere in this issue. While Green suggested a cultural sequence for the Auckland Province only, Parker's demonstration of structural correlations between two sites in such discrete regions as the Coromandel Peninsula and North Taranaki indicate that this sequence may have more than local application. Moreover, the method that Green employed - particularly his emphasis on the relevance of ecological as well as artifactual and structural data - has general application. To my mind, his approach to the question of cultural sequence renders most of the previous discussion irrelevant.

Green was drawing on a wide range of evidence which has been made available largely through the fieldwork of the last eight years. He stressed that it had considerable gaps, and these are probably greater in other regions. On the other hand, what Shawcross aptly called 'an archaeological tyranny of the many by the few' whereby 'assemblages have had their ages determined through the possession of a limited number of elements' has tended to polarise our attitudes and restrict attention to artifacts. As Parker pointed out, these cannot be regarded as sufficiently sensitive indicators of cultural change. If we look at our evidence again, we may well find that our gaps are lesser than we thought.

Aside from theoretical lessons, how can these fresh concepts concerning the analysis of the cultural succession affect what we actually do? The current emphasis on regional investigation gives particular point to the work for the Site Recording Scheme, though this is at present patchy, even in those regions where groups are established. But what can be envisaged for such areas as the East Coast, Hawke's Bay, the West Coast of the South Island or Southland, where membership is either small or non-existent?

One possibility, now contemplated for Southland, is the running of an archaeological week-end, which would consist of a number of lectures and site-visits. Out of this could emerge a working group to begin the systematic archaeological exploration of the district, making use of the Association's recording material where appropriate and allying itself firmly with the local museum. It is precisely in this situation that the advice of the Council could be useful on which sites demand special attention, in the light of our overall research needs.

The Christchurch Conference also provided a much-needed reminder that the Association could concern itself much more with research. Except for the production of the Newsletter, it has tended to become rather remote from local activities, and because the Council only rarely receives accounts of current fieldwork, it is not often in a position to assist in the planning of further work. Yet, because it has the means to pool opinion, the Council ought to be able to suggest not only methods but also aims in local research which would be particularly valuable for the country as a whole.

This would not mean the replacement of local initiative by outside direction. It would avoid duplication of effort, and, by opening up the avenues of communication, could help to raise standards of excavation by constructive advice and criticism.

The Council for British Archaeology has a number of committees which direct attention to the research problems of particular periods. While such a formal arrangement is hardly required here, there would seem to be a case for the Council to act in the same spirit. Some fields which suggest themselves are the collection of radiocarbon samples from nationally significant sites; the co-ordination of the work on obsidian dating, and the build-up of more representative and reliable avifaunal collections - Scarlett's highly important list of the known distribution of moa genera could surely be filled out very rapidly in this way.

If we can develop a more directional view of the immediate future, the problems aired at the Christchurch Conference on the cultural succession have some chance of solution. Moreover, the acceptance of the principle that what matters is the relating of local interests to national needs would enable us to tailor our strategy and tactics to the human resources available.

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ASPECT AND PHASE ON SKIPPER'S RIDGE (OPITO) AND
KUMARA - KAIAMO (URENUI)

Abridged by R.H. Parker

In New Zealand Archaeology the use of typologies of portable artifacts to define cultural sequences has resulted in a certain circularity of argument. A given type must have originated either in New Zealand or out of it. There are thus two necessary classes of types, which if we use the infrequent finds to classify the components of our sites, must yield two necessary classes of sites:- "early" sites characterised by the presence of artifacts of types widely distributed in Polynesia, and "late" sites characterised by the