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ARCHAEOLOGY AND THE GREENS IN NEW ZEALAND

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INTRODUCTION

After a brief survey of the New Zealand conservation scene and the various groups involved in the conservation debate, the role of archaeology in this debate will be discussed. Following some general observations about the political content of conservationist arguments, a strategy for achieving archaeological and conservationist goals in New Zealand will be approached.

THE NEW ZEALAND SCENE

It is the Maori struggle for land, economic and political rights which creates the unique circumstances of the conservation debate in New Zealand today.

While Article 2 of the Treaty of Waitangi guaranteed the Chiefs and Tribes of New Zealand '...the full exclusive and undisturbed possession of their Lands and Estates, Forests, Fisheries and other properties...' (Orange 1987: 258), the Treaty until recently has had no force in law. Over the past few years, however, the Government, as part of its legislative programme for asset sales, enshrined the Treaty in law for the first time. In so doing, the Government opened the way for numerous challenges over fishery quotas, the sale of forest and the transfer of Crown lands to government corporations. In addition, the Waitangi Tribunal has been created to examine Maori grievances back to 1840. Other laws, for example the Historic Places Act and proposed Resource Management Act, recognise Maori interests in traditional and other sites (wahi tapu) on private lands irrespective of ownership.

Finally, the Te Maori exhibition in 1984, at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, raised the international profile of Maori culture and art. At the same time, the events leading up to the exhibition established the concept of cultural ownership, the principle that decision making about Maori carvings or other taonga should directly involve relevant tribal groups whether or not the object was privately owned or curated in a museum (Mead 1986: 99). This principle is currently being written into a revised Antiquities Act with profound consequences for archaeology in terms of the control and interpretation of archaeological materials.

The Maori renaissance allies a cultural conservatism with a drive to get the

¹ My presence at the Congress was supported by the New Zealand Historic Places Trust. However, the views that follow are my own.

benefits of a capitalist, market economy. These seemingly contradictory features of the movement have the potential to dismay Pakehas of all political hues.

In addition to the Maori dimension discussed above, New Zealand has all the other necessary ingredients for a noisy conservation debate. In the South Island, as in Tasmania, tourism, forestry, hydro-electricity generation and aluminium smelting are major facets of life. These industries compete with the conservation movement for wild rivers, high mountains, wilderness areas and beech forests, all of World Heritage standard. Elsewhere in the South Island and in the North Island, the concentration of urban populations and industries has the capacity to transform and blight the landscape. At the political level, government, under the influence of freemarket ideology, has created high unemployment, dismantled central government controls and servicing, and sold state assets including crown lands and forests. This has added to the worries of Maoris and conservationists alike.

Internationally, New Zealand conservationists are active against nuclear arms and testing in the Pacific, driftnet fishing, ozone depletion and the greenhouse effect.

The New Zealand conservation movement and debate covers the widest possible spectrum of groups and ideas. At one end, dedicated greenies or deep ecologists present a radical critique of consumerism and industrial society. The Royal Forest and Bird Society takes a somewhat less strident stance, while the Department of Conservation brings idealists, university researchers, managers and bureaucrats together in a single organisation that operates simultaneously as an organ of government and advocate of conservation.

ARCHAEOLOGY IN THE CONSERVATION DEBATE

Archaeologists enter the debate at three levels. Firstly, as members of the public with specialised knowledge advocating site and environmental protection. Secondly, as historians, i.e. as researchers into the prehistoric past. Finally, as managers working in site protection agencies such as the New Zealand Historic Places Trust or the Department of Conservation.

In some cases, archaeologists' claims to expertise and a privileged position in the conservation debate are backed up by specific legislation. This is true of the Historic Places Trust regarding the protection of archaeological sites. At other times, however, the claims of archaeologists are likely to be contested, for different reasons, by all sectors of the conservation movement, and by the Maori community. While archaeology is no friend of energy and minerals ministries, nor of developers and land subdividers, archaeologists seem sometimes to have the unenviable knack of also staying off-side with local government authorities, the Department of Conservation, Maori authorities, and conservationists at large.

Conservation groups are usually happy to use the results of archaeology to support their causes. However, archaeology is also seen to have interests in opposition to both the conservationist and Maori causes. An example from Auckland might assist our understanding of why this might be so.

MOUNT EDEN AND THE AUCKLAND VOLCANIC CONES

Within the city environs of Auckland are a series of volcanic cones. These were used by Maoris as fortified refuges, and for food storage, habitation and gardens. They are large and spectacular archaeological sites.

Less than half of Auckland's cones have survived the quarrying activities of the city's previous civic authorities (Fox 1977: 1-2). Of those that remain, most are now recreational reserves and have access roads, car parks, radio and television transmitters, water reservoirs and other public facilities built on their archaeological features. Only the passing of specialised archaeological legislation in 1976 slowed this official onslaught.

Mount Eden, located a kilometre from the city centre, is a good example. This mountain has been part of the public's artistic imagination since the early days of European settlement. It figures prominently in many recent art works and is regarded as a symbol for the local district. However, this regard, as often as not, takes an imaginative and romanticised form that includes solstice ceremonies and a New Age feminine symbolism (Anon 1986).

Mt Eden, or Maungawhau, plays an important role in Maori tradition. Its central crater was a sacred place where Mataho, the god of volcanos, could be asked to remain quiet. The pa at Maungawhau, belonging to Kiwi Tamaki of the Waiohau, was abandoned in the 18th century before the Waiohau were defeated by the Ngati Whatua, the current mana whenua of the Auckland area (Simmons 1987: 45).

From the Maori point of view, tradition provides a sufficient historical account for Maungawhau. For the European populace, Mount Eden is incorporated into a European mythological tradition. Both groups see the archaeological aspects of Mount Eden, its pits, terraces and defensive ditches, as an interesting enough account, but one that is less satisfying than either Maori tradition or European fanciful, romantic accounts.

The Department of Conservation has little difficulty in dealing with large, well-defined archaeological monuments or with historic buildings and industrial sites. Difficulties come in, however, when large numbers of ordinary archaeological sites, middens, terraces etc., occur in areas that are managed primarily for nature conservation, e.g., off-shore island and coastal reserves. Although the Conservation Act 1987 directs the Department to preserve and protect both natural and historic resources, the Department sees its primary function as nature conservation. In the minds of conservation managers, natural and historic appear to be mutually exclusive entities. Where numbers of sites are located in areas of natural interest, managers seem to have difficulty creating an integrated plan of management that balances natural and cultural objectives. Instead they demand that the archaeologists pick out the most significant sites so that these can be mentally, and sometimes physically, excised from the management of the rest of the reserve. Although a production forest is quite a different entity, the demands made on archaeologists by the managers of nature reserves and exotic production forests are remarkably similar (Coster 1979: 91-93).

This tendency is not helped by the fact that archaeologists also tend to conceive of archaeological sites as cultural spots superimposed onto a natural landscape (Allen 1988: 144-145). Consequently, archaeologists respond to these management demands in a way that reinforces the conceptual separation of nature

and culture.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITE MANAGEMENT AND THE MAORI DIMENSION

In interacting with Maori groups, archaeologists and site managers generally face a number of objections. These are, firstly, that the relationship between Maori groups (whanau or hapu), places and the environment is a personal rather than a public one. It is therefore out of bounds to Pakeha researchers. Puia (1990: 277) notes that, for the Maori, Nature is a living family member and that Maori social concepts such as whanaungatanga, whanau, hapu, and iwi include nature, the environment, living things and places associated with the ancestors.

Secondly, Maoris see academic research as an attempt 'to reduce the past and all it contains about who you are to the skeletal rigours of science' (O'Regan 1987: 141).

O'Regan argues that

'The methods and approaches of Pakeha scholarship tend to be seen as anti-social and un-Maori... A tension arises, though, when it is the Maori past that is the subject of Pakeha inquiry, particularly by archaeology but most especially when areas such as whakapapa (genealogy) and mythology are subjected to the systems and processes of academic study... A Maori view of the past... denies scholars any absolute right to study my past without my consent... It says that I am the primary proprietor of my past.' (O'Regan 1987: 141-142)

Finally, it is thought that archaeology attempts to obviate Maori accounts of the past. Here the archaeological and Maori viewpoints are seen as competing rather than complementary historical accounts (Fung and Allen 1984: 215). This is not helped by the fact that archaeologists sometimes claim access to a total historic view. New Zealand archaeologists have devoted considerable time to debating whether there was any historical information to be found in Maori traditions (Davidson 1984: 10). Green has argued that where there are no written records, oral history fades rapidly into myth and legend and that archaeology therefore provides the only reliable information for the distant past (Green 1977: 77). Puia (1990: 272), however, notes that 'a high cultural value was placed on the delivery and transmission of detailed facts and beliefs in order to ensure continuity, accuracy and consistency.' Certainly genealogies and claims to land and mana were debated at marae gatherings. Orbell (1985: 65) states that Maori narratives about lines of descent, tribal alliances, battles and migrations concerning recent ancestors who lived during the last few centuries contain historical information. She contrasts these with traditions about the homeland Hawaiki and the voyaging canoes which she states (1985: 66) are powerful religious narratives which shaped human lives and made the world meaningful.

While Maoris actively work to manage and protect places of traditional importance, their concern, both now and in the past, was about human exploitation or pollution of sites (Puia 1990: 273). Human activities, such as excavation, break the laws of tapu. Natural agencies of site destruction, erosion or vegetation growth would not be interpreted as altering a site's mauri, or

protecting principle.

This is similar to a view put forward by Greeves (1989). Greeves notes that the scheduling of archaeological sites in Britain over many years has left 90% of sites legally unprotected. He criticises archaeologists for their 'rescue excavation mentality' and argues that more emphasis should be put on non-destructive site protection.

He argues:

'Isn't it enough to know that these features exist? Their importance transcends any amount of data collection ... What rich storytelling could be evolved around them ... What rich source material for artists and poets!... Archaeology ... has a special role to play in awakening a sense of wonder for the processes of decay ... It can also offer alternatives to the consumerism of modern society by advocating the merits of quiet observation, reflection, and the use of the imagination.' (Greeves 1989: 661, 664)

The manner in which archaeological site managers operate can dismay Maori and conservationist supporters. This is especially the case when an area of traditional or ecological significance is declared to have no archaeological sites worthy of protection. Similarly rescue excavations can be seen as a process that simultaneously disturbs ancestral sites and opens up the area for development - a sort of clearing away of environmental and cultural impediments. In some ways, the act of planning and managing resources allows more intensive land use elsewhere by creating enclaves and refuges where nature and cultural sites can be protected (Fung and Allen 1984: 218). On the other hand, excavated sites with known dates and archaeological contents can form part of a convincing argument for the preservation of entire areas, e.g., Kakadu National Park (Jones 1985).

GREEN IDEOLOGY

Duncan Jeans, in a stimulating essay, argues that major political, social and economic battles in Western society are being fought in terms of abstract concepts of Nature and Human Nature (Jeans 1983). Groups with conflicting ideologies use these concepts to marshal both arguments and followers. Jeans comments 'For those of a conservative cast of mind, Nature is "red in tooth and claw", and human nature shares that quality. For the socialist, the harmonious Nature of mutual assistance, as stressed in ecological models, is the preferred view' (1983: 180).

The intellectual battle over what constitutes human nature is a product of the Enlightenment and it has been raging ever since. Wordsworth, the Romantic poet, Rousseau, Freud and Marx have each articulated part of this argument in the context of social criticism. All gave the highest value to Natural Man and painted a dark contrast with the circumstances of urbanised civilisation.

Wordsworth described progress as being unreasoning, concerned with the mean and vulgar works of man. Nature, however, he saw as the Wisdom and Spirit of the Universe, a force that purified human life (The Prelude - Hayward 1962: 266-268). Rousseau saw modern society as reducing free citizens to slaves;

Freud interpreted neuroses as the product of the cultural suppression of our natural instincts and emotions. Marx argued that the commodification of Nature and workers in modern capitalist society led to heartless alienation and exploitation. The goal of mankind was to return to a modern version of classless, primitive communism.

The intellectual separation of nature and culture expressed by these authors represents a dualism that lies at the heart of contemporary social debate.² In some ways it would be more accurate to describe the dualism as natural : unnatural. Culture in the sense of indigenous Maori culture is seen as a natural part of human nature³ in opposition to the unnatural, imposed culture of modern western society (During 1989: 762-763).

The romantic and radical critique of established social norms was, until recently, located at the margins of society. However, since the 1960s a rising wave of sectarianism has shattered the political loyalties of an important segment of middle New Zealand. In the place of established party loyalties and ethnic community stability, we now have a myriad of single issue political movements. These include not only conservation, women's liberation, minority and land rights, and opposition to pollution and nuclear power, but also issues such as proportional voting, community control, and non-institutionalised health systems. In the face of accusations of institutional racism, bourgeois capture of the bureaucracy and service institutions, sexism, colonialism, the creation of poverty, environmental exploitation and degradation, a significant part of the middle class has lost confidence in its institutions and now makes common cause with its previous accusers (Enzenberger 1976: 274-275).

The anthropologist Mary Douglas has written about sectarian groups (Douglas 1973; Douglas and Wildavsky 1982). While single issue political groups have differing aims, some ideas are held in common. There is a preference for what is supposedly naturally rather than socially given. There is the belief in radical social equality and innate human goodness. This is coupled with a distrust of authority, hierarchical organisation and bureaucracy. There is also a preference for intuitive and instant forms of knowledge and a rejection of institutionalised learning, academic specialisation and technological progress. Science and technology, rather than human failings, are blamed for the environmental decline.

Finally, government is not respected as the political expression of the commonwealth but is seen as a tool, manipulated now by economic interests but with coercive powers available to be used to achieve single issue ends. On moral issues, which can include teetotalism, racism, and the protection of nature, sectarians advocate direct state manipulation while at the same time claiming that sovereignty lies with the individual and with small egalitarian groups.

² Ortner (1972) claims the view held by both feminists and male chauvinists that female qualities are more natural than male ones assists the devaluation of women's role in Western society.

³ The concepts of Noble and Ignoble savages are discussed by Borsboom (1988). He concludes that the first is used as a fundamental criticism of progress, development and colonisation whenever society is on the verge of radical changes. On the other hand, savages are seen as Ignoble in order to justify and legitimate the process of civilisation and its further development.

The nature : culture opposition has, in terms of Maori rhetoric, been transformed into a Maori : Pakeha opposition. In the minds of conservationists and many Maoris, Maori society is placed at the natural or prehistoric end of the spectrum. The outcome of the political and economic processes that have occurred since 1840 are seen as being solely Pakeha. Institutions such as trade unions, universities, and the legal system are portrayed as being entirely Pakeha in origin (During 1989: 763; Hansen 1989: 894). Pakeha attitudes - treating people, land and resources as commodities, and institutionalised learning and science - are rejected as being little more than part of the colonial attack on Maori society. This has drawn what is unlikely to be a popular response from Mihaka:

The phenomena of science and technology are not, ...the sole preserve of the Pakeha...Rather, it is the cumulative effect of the most advanced ideas that all mankind has gathered from the beginning of time...I disagree with our New Zealand situation being divided into a Pakeha world - Maori world dispute. More emphasis for instance should be placed on analyzing race relations from a socio-economic class point of view...If we were able to do this consistently, it would increase the chances that people would stop using such shallow definitions as "Pakeha Law", "Pakeha Institutions", "Pakeha Parliament" etc, to make a point...Carving canoes, weaving kits and practising kapa haka for instance, is not, in my mind, conducive to innovative thinking, because it cannot equip people to better appreciate what is needed for them to enter the 21st century.' (Mihaka 1989: 46 and 48 - order of quotes changed slightly.)

For the conservationists, the way out of the nature : culture dilemma lies in the analysis of the social relations of the exploitation of nature (Enzenberger 1976: 295). Such an analysis might avoid some of the needless confrontations between conservationists and timberworkers over the logging of indigenous forests. For Maoris, the social relations of colonial domination and a study of colonial political economy might allow identification of hostile, neutral and supportive groups within an economy that has already integrated Maori and Pakeha (Mihaka 1989: 92-93).

While the Department of Conservation and the Ministry for the Environment have not been taken over by radical Maoris, feminists or greenies, the nature : culture dualism has its effects on Departmental policies. Prehistoric Maori society is portrayed as being in balance with nature and not responsible for widespread environmental changes. Proposals for Natural Area status require that there is no evidence of human modification despite knowledge that Maoris had major effects on New Zealand's forests and wetlands (McGlone 1983).

A TENTATIVE STRATEGY

The dilemma for archaeologists is that the claims of the conservationist and rights movements have content. The environment and many species are endangered, Maori society and resources have been under attack since the first Europeans arrived, chemicals and the nuclear industry do endanger the planet. Similarly, the suspicions regarding government institutions and political forms are

well placed. However, no matter how accurate conservationist groups are in identifying problems, the political programmes they advocate cannot, in the long run, solve the problems of environmental pollution, social equity and racial and sexual discrimination.

For the conservationists and Maoris, conflating criticisms of colonialism, the state and modern industrial society with a sense of moral outrage creates a certainty in the correctness of their analysis and of the solutions they advocate. The ultimate answers to our present difficulties cannot be in a return to a mythical democratic, smallscale (Maori?) Garden of Eden nor an equally mythical perfect market.

Conservation analysis and criticisms attack many of the institutions and traditions that form a central part of social democratic political systems, particularly the concepts of disinterested public and community service, objective enquiry and free debate. These criticisms disarm contemporary society and leave it less able to defend its institutions and traditions from beleaguering. Such assaults come from a far more dangerous adversary than the conservationists, namely, the advocates of free market exchange systems and of largescale multinational capitalist enterprises.

Although coming from an entirely different direction to those of freemarket economists, Maori, feminist, and conservationist criticisms have contributed to the dismantling and deregulating of government institutions in New Zealand, particularly those concerned with health, education, social welfare, Maori affairs and resource management. This 'decentralisation' has had the effect of further weakening those integrative institutions which mediated between the citizen and the state and between the individual and the market, e.g. welfare organisations (including state departments), political parties, trade unions and the universities.

In New Zealand, most of our institutions and traditions are in a process of change. This is part of a world-wide trend that cannot be prevented. Archaeologists can use the current reaction against bureaucratic and technological rationality to further humanise the universities, museums and site preservation departments. However, we have to be wary of advocates of radical decentralisation and continue to defend those institutions which, in their flawed way, fulfil the roles of education, protection, healing and mediation within our society. The new society, when it emerges, will require institutions capable of performing these functions even when, happily, we have transcended the limitations of today's social and political forms.

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