



NEW ZEALAND
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NEW ZEALAND ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER



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BOOK REVIEWS

Foss Leach and Janet Davidson (eds), Archaeological Studies of Pacific Stone Resources. British Archaeological Reports, International Series 104, 1981. 237 pp.

This volume results from a symposium on stone resources in the Pacific which was part of the 14th Pacific Science Congress held in Khabarovsk in the U.S.S.R. in 1979. There are thirteen contributions ranging over the west and south Pacific and as with all symposium papers the standard varies somewhat. New Zealand readers who may buy this for the articles of local interest need to have no fears however. Two papers appear here which had earlier airings at New Zealand conferences; Russell Beck's research into Maori heat treatment of nephrite to alter its appearance and rheological character, and the second on Helen Leach's work on the technology employed in pre-forming Maori adzes made by utilising flaking and blade-making techniques. Both these are contributions of lasting value.

Also on the New Zealand scene is a paper by Sutton and Campbell on the prehistoric distribution of stone resources in the Chatham Islands, principally cherts, showing in the Moriori phase there were considerable constraints on use of remote resources which can be equated to the late occupation by "self sufficient localised groups". There was still selection, however, with higher quality, more remote sources being preferred over closer, lower quality sources. Janet Davidson's paper brings together a wide variety of dispersal information on the distribution of rock materials in and from the northern North Island of New Zealand, producing a valuable review and signalling the areas where more work is needed.

The longest paper is by Peter Coutts and J.P. Wesson reviewing, not only Phillipine stone industries, but as well, approaches to Phillipine prehistory. While this may sound of parochial interest, this is not the case for it is an outspoken review of previous work, and adopts a stance in respect of model building which is of wider interest, as are the possibilities of linking early Phillipine industries to those of areas to the south.

Isabel McBryde and Graham Harrison's paper on the distribution of stone hatchet heads from three sources in Victoria is the latest of series of papers by the senior author reporting progress on this research project, showing analytical tools

which can take interpretation of distributions into the fields of social boundaries, methods of exchange, and relative perceived value of different stone resources. If this paper shows some sophistication in the anthropological concepts explored, that by three Japanese, Higashimuna, Warashina and Kamaki eschews any interpretation of patterns of sourced stone artefacts from southern Japan. This is regrettable for the study of 'Sankunite' sourcing is technically unassailable (it must represent a sizeable use of institutional resources) and the distribution maps show some intriguing features.

Two papers present data on the developing study of sourcing obsidians from the region, that by Foss Leach and S.E. Warren on the use of Neutron Activation Analysis and screening excavated assemblages to use wherever possible rapid, cheap and non-destructive methods to discriminate New Zealand and other oceanic sources. A paper by Kovnurko, Mishin and Suslov considers some special interpretation problems of element analysis considering covariance between groups of elements which seem to be recurring features over wide areas.

Ambrose, Bird and Duerden tackle the problem of sourcing obsidians when the source area is volcanically active within human history, with some sources apparently disappearing and others now existing not having done so earlier. They attempt to characterise sources from the southern Admiralty Islands by using the multivariate statistical technique of clustering together some 338 individual analyses of collected samples, some from archaeological sites. The nine clusters they decide on cannot all be identified as actual sources. Interestingly, they do not use the internal analytical data to decide on nine as the best number of clusters but choose this number as it produces the most order in the local archaeological data. They appear to have done this by inspection but an application of information theory to the problem by this reviewer confirms their choice as superior to 8 or 7 clusters. Using such a criterion does raise the question of circularity but the technique is an intriguing one of theoretical interest. The second demonstration of the clarity of the clusters advanced by the authors, that a subsequent discriminant analysis correctly reallocated 96% of the clustered samples is not valid as it simply indicates the distance measurements used in the two analyses are not quite the same.

Finally, a paper by Wise considers how axes vary in space in two New Guinea Highland areas; one where axes are traded from a

central source and a second where axes are made from local materials. He hypothesises the first group will be of homogeneous shape and the latter spatially diverse. His analysis which purports to demonstrate that this is in fact the case cannot be accepted. The multivariant analysis using raw size data, which must be correlated, and ratios (which in no way guarantee reduction of correlation) must make the order in the axe similarity matrix he presents little else but equivalent to the order of the axes along the first principal component. The sorting procedure applied to the matrix is not given. While the locally produced axes sample do cluster into regional groups the claim that the traded sample does not is questionable as there appears to be some tendency for local axes to appear together in the sorted order. This could be an artefact of the sorting procedure. Again there could well be regional differences in this sample which are not revealed by the analysis performed.

All in all a stimulating collection.

Garry Law

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David L. Harrowfield, Sledging into History. Auckland, MacMillan, 1981. 119 pp., 86 colour and 42 black and white plates, 11 figures, 6 appendices, bibliography. \$29.50.

This copiously illustrated volume which represents the author's impressions and observations of a season of work in Antarctica in the summer of 1977-78, repairing and stabilising the historic huts on Ross Island of the early Antarctic explorers, and salvaging and recording their contents, will be enjoyed by its readers. Because of its well-chosen photographs, both recent and historic, its simple but informative marginal sketches, and its excellent presentation, it will constantly be referred to by those interested in the history of Antarctic exploration.

The text clearly originates from the personal diary kept by the author. This is both a strength and a weakness. The plain and unadorned literary style successfully conveys the author's attraction to, and his enthusiasm for, the unique world which is Antarctica. It also manages to communicate in a rather low-key way, his understanding of the achievements of those hardy participants in the 'heroic age' of Antarctic exploration. In this it allows the reader to vicariously share

Harrowfield's enjoyment of two separate eras of polar activity. But its episodic sections are loosely, if not curiously integrated with historic and other background material, and disconcerting changes of tense might have been more firmly edited.

The book is the poorer for the decision not to include a section on the history of the several exploring expeditions to this part of Antarctica. Over the last three decades or so it has become fashionable no longer to ensure that our children learn about the achievements and exploits of the heroes of previous decades and centuries. There are today, many children, and their parents, who are largely ignorant of the achievements of such people as Scott and Shackleton. Because of this, they will fail to identify with and to understand the people and events which clearly mean so much to David Harrowfield. I wish he had extended his book to include a chapter which at least sketched in the historical background of the people, events and places about which he was writing.

The photographs in this volume are perhaps its major strength. The historic photographs are well chosen and comprise a collection which is not available elsewhere. If history, like archaeology, is about people, then it is these photographs which bring this book to life, and give real purpose to Harrowfield's programme. The modern photographs, mainly in colour, excellently complement the historical selection. It is an irritation, however, to have to keep referring to a list of illustrations at the front of the book to ascertain credits for the photography.

Readers should not be misled by the comment in the dust-jacket blurb, or by the pointing trowel in Plate 38, into anticipation that this volume may be a significant contribution to the archaeology of historic sites. Clearly Harrowfield and his assistant were careful to accurately record details of the location of items which they were uncovering and moving, and to provide for their proper conservation once they had been disturbed. They were also aware that earlier parties working on the sites had not always been sufficiently careful about such details. But a book on historic site archaeology it is not. While the volume is not aimed at the 'serious reading' shelf, however, it is a well produced and informative book, and I would recommend it to readers of the Newsletter.

Jim McKinlay