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BOOK REVIEWS

Janet Davidson, The Prehistory of New Zealand. Longman Paul, Auckland, 1984. 270 pp, 157 illustrations, bibliography, index. \$39.95.

The need for a substantial book about Maori archaeology (or Polynesian plus Maori archaeology as Davidson prefers), has been keenly felt by archaeologists, and a significant sector of the public alike, for decades. We have tried to make do with Duff's The Moahunter Period of Maori Culture (1956, 1977) and have succeeded in propagating a view of New Zealand's past which has become increasingly at odds with the evidence. Green's broader perspective in Adaptation and Change in Maori Culture (1974), and the emphasis upon regionalism in Prickett's The First Thousand Years (1982) have helped to balance the picture, but a swag of papers and booklets provides no real substitute for a single, extended and comprehensive work on the archaeology of our pre-European past.

Janet Davidson's book has risen to that task. The Prehistory of New Zealand is not merely the first such book, and that considerable achievement alone deserves recognition and honour, but it is also of outstanding quality. Its brisk, rather uncompromising style may not entice the uninformed browser, but anyone with a deeper interest will read and profit from it with that feeling of security which is engendered by an author who is manifestly on top of her subject.

Whether that is, in fact, prehistory depends upon how narrowly one wants to draw distinctions. The book is largely concerned with actual archaeological remains and hardly at all with either the creation of a narrative of past events or the study of cultural adaptation. In this it is very much Davidson's book, reflecting her archaeological attitudes and idiosyncracies, and although I take issue with some of these below, they lend character to her writing and help to lighten the data-rich text.

Perhaps the most distinctive feature of the book is that Davidson has opted for a typological approach which is followed with museological devotion. Not merely artefacts, as we usually conceive of them, but just about everything else as well, including modes of subsistence and social organisation, are described in a precise taxonomic way which leaves little room for consideration at any other level. There is, here, virtually no discussion of the lifeways of inferred groups, of procurement or production strategies, of

the integration of one activity with another (seasonality is largely ignored), or of any with specific environmental contexts. Even at the level of individual sites there is no attempt to create a once-living community. It follows from this approach, of course, that any attempt at higher level explanations is precluded as well. Davidson's distaste for theory, even for intelligent speculation, is made plain at the outset. She promises, instead, an underlying argument about locally variable "adjustments and developments" (p. 5), but in the event this is honoured more in the breach than the observance.

Her disinclination for analysis, for following the form of things beyond their immediate functions, is to some extent founded upon an unusually narrow view of what kinds of evidence should be admitted. In particular, Davidson sets out to blinker herself to any ethnographic evidence from later than the 18th century. At first sight this might seem an admirable idea, but it simply will not work. Even if Davidson could shut out from her mind the 19th century ethnography with which she is familiar and which forms the basis of much general inference about all aspects of Maori life, the sources she uses have not taken the same decision. The book is thus riddled with the disguised use of 19th century ethnography by other people upon whose information she relies, and Davidson herself seems occasionally aware of this by resorting to terms such as 'the ethnographic period' which convey a wider chronological span than she wants. Amongst the uses of 19th century ethnography which I noted were the following: on barracouta and kahawai lures (p. 65-66), on horticulture (p. 116, 119, 121), on root storage (p. 128), on muttonbirding (p. 137), on barracouta processing (p. 141), on seasonality (p. 145-146), on hapu (p. 149-150), on houses (p. 153, 157, 159, 161, 162), on fences (p. 162), on base settlements (p. 166), on fishing camps (p. 169), on social organisations (p. 169), on burial practices (p. 174, 177) and on muru (p. 195). None of this is surprising, of course, since the 18th century observations alone are quite inadequate as a basis of inference about most aspects of Maori life or material culture. More importantly, I believe that there is some woolly thinking about this matter. The common belief in a comparative purity of 18th century observations implies that, to an extent not occurring later, observers understood what they saw and observed behaved as they usually did. We have good reason to doubt that either was the case. This is not to say that 18th century observations were in some way worse, only that they are not necessarily better. On observations of southern Maori fishing and family life, for instance, it is at least a moot point whether we should prefer Cook and Banks to Boulton, Kent or Brunner, and in any case it is surely more than a little silly to reject

outright the relevance of observations by the latter for inferences about pre-European lifeways; we have to be careful with all ethnographic observations, but our care should not be proportionate to their age alone. Davidson rejects the use of all traditional evidence as well, on rather dubious grounds (though she does very occasionally invoke it, e.g. p. 182), and I wonder whether, in both cases, a reasonable desire to constrain her field of interest was actually the stronger motive.

In the difficult task of balancing her coverage of regional specialities, Davidson is generally even-handed, but occasionally has slipped. The Chathams are entirely explained away on grounds which ought also to apply to the Kermadecs, and South Island moa hunting is hardly done justice in the page devoted to it (nor, for that matter are other characteristically southern forms of subsistence such as sealing and ti exploitation). There are also instances where North Island occurrences of artefactual types are listed but the corresponding South Island distribution is discussed only in general terms (for example see comments on shark teeth ornaments (p.81), Archaic adzes (p.96), greenstone adzes and chisels (p.100) and attrition saws (p.108). In this matter I suspect that Davidson has been provoked to react to Duff's South Island bias.

The treatment of material culture is remarkable for its attempt to deal with most archaeological types, though not all with equal enthusiasm. Fish hooks, harpoons and needles, for instance, are discussed in more detail than reels, whale-tooth pendants and slate knives. Adzes get much less notice here than is customary, not necessarily a bad thing, but little attention is devoted to distribution, chronology or recent work on morphological development. A major omission, in my view, is the southern rockshelter material which provides such valuable examples of footwear, clothing and domestic artefacts. Since Davidson probably had most of the information about most artefact classes at her fingertips it is a pity that more tables were not drawn to present the basic distributional data (there is only one table in the book). Doing so would have significantly added to the research value of the material culture section.

My last criticism is one about criticism itself. Davidson is very reluctant to subject her source material to any apparent critical scrutiny. In one important respect this attitude may carry some dangers. Davidson leans rather

heavily on the results of a single research project, the Palliser Bay work, in which the central theme of environmental change is clearly questionable on a number of grounds. Since it is a theme carried through into various conclusions about horticulture, settlement patterns and warfare which Davidson adopts, it ought not, in my view, to have been taken simply at face value.

Outweighing these various drawbacks, however, are the strengths of Davidson's book. Leaving aside the fact that it is attractive, has well-chosen illustrations, and very helpful lists of sites, and maps of them, at the end, I would pick three major features in which it stands out. First, it is remarkably broad in scope. Davidson takes on nearly every aspect of Maori life and offers at the very least a useful summary of each - usually a great deal more. Second, it is admirably comprehensive in its information. Whatever deficiencies or omissions one can detect, it is apparent throughout that Davidson has a peerless grasp of New Zealand's archaeological evidence. Above all, it is unquestionably scholarly. Davidson writes plainly and intelligently, is appropriately demanding and cautious in inference, too cautious perhaps at times, does not conceal gaps in the data and manages, on the whole, a judicious balance between a very wide variety of topics. Her approach may be too academic for many general readers, although writing 'up' is surely to be preferred to writing 'down', but I, at any rate, am pleased that our first substantial book on Maori archaeology should maintain an intellectual standard and dignity consistent with the recent development of our discipline. Popular versions can follow, but serious students of the subject need nourishment as well and they have waited long enough.

The Prehistory of New Zealand is a benchmark in the history of our archaeology, and not merely because it is first. It can, in my view, claim a place in the front rank of scholarly works about the Maori and it is inconceivable that anyone with a serious interest would not keep a copy close at hand.

Atholl Anderson

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Sidney Moko Mead (editor), Te Maori. Maori Art from New Zealand Collections. Heinemann Publishers (N.Z.) Ltd, Auckland, in association with The American Federation of Arts. 244 pp. \$49.95.

Te Maori is a magnificent book and it contains some of the most important statements ever to be made about Maori art. The undoubted success of the Te Maori exhibition now showing at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York has focussed world wide attention on the artistry and artefacts of the New Zealand Maori. However, the acclaim accorded to Te Maori does little to dissipate the sourness left by some aspects of the way the collection and dispatch of the artefacts was organised. Nobody, reading the book or seeing the exhibition would realise the immense amount of work put into Te Maori by New Zealand museums and AGMANZ. (In this respect I commend to readers a letter from Hamish Keith in October 27 issue of the New Zealand Listener). Nor has the role of our museums in collecting and preserving, and, notwithstanding statements to the contrary, displaying the artefacts, ever really been acknowledged.

The book is in two basic sections, Mana Maori, comprising seven essays by Mead (two), Agnes Sullivan, David Simmons, Anne Salmon, Bernie Kernot and Piri Sciascia, and Te Rarangi Taonga, an illustrated catalogue of the 174 artefacts in the exhibition. A selection of the artefacts are also shown in colour plates, beautifully photographed by Athol McCredie and superbly printed in Japan.

In his opening essay, Mead writes of the Maori attitude towards taonga - some Maori individuals are afraid of them, others treat them with awe and respect, while others rejoice in being permitted to touch such valuable and precious treasures. Such behaviour is familiar to museum people who have responsibility for looking after collections of artefacts, but there must be many who would find Mead's article enlightening and informative; indeed I would recommend it to anyone who has any interest in the material culture of the Maori.

In his second essay Mead recounts a mythical explanation for development of Maori art - the story of Ruatēpupuke who obtained the art of wood carving from the sea god, Tangaroa - and a Pakeha style four-stage hypothetical sequence of its development in New Zealand. Appropriately the latter has Maori labels (with English translation) thus:

Nga Kakano (The Seeds) A.D. 900-1200
 Te Tipunga (The Growth) A.D. 1200-1500
 Te Puawaitanga (The Flowering) A.D. 1500-1800
 Te Huringa (The Turning) A.D. 1800-present

The value of this sequence is not that it brings anything new to the study of prehistory as such, but (in Mead's terms) it deals with Maori art in the context of its own rich cultural background. All too often Maoris tend to feel alienated from studies made of their prehistoric culture because of the Pakeha methods, concepts and terminology used in those studies. Were it to be widely adopted (which is rather doubtful) Mead's classification would be a step, albeit a small one, in the right direction.

In her essay, "The Roots of Maori Culture", Agnes Sullivan summarises current beliefs on the origins of the East Polynesians and, from them, the New Zealand Maoris. She discusses the settlement of this country and the development of Maori culture within it. Sullivan's overview is orthodox and uncritical, but she does make a plea for not disregarding the Hawaiki traditions and for keeping an open mind on the possibility of East Polynesian arrivals in New Zealand up to about the fourteenth century.

David Simmons deals mainly with regional wood carving styles throughout New Zealand, describing some of the basic differences particularly in reference to the artefacts in the Te Maori exhibition. His article is not intended to describe the different styles in detail, but rather to draw the attention of the general reader to the fact that differences do exist, and to discuss some of the traditional background pertinent to them.

Anne Salmond, in "Pathways in the Maori World", attempts to place these regional differences, and taonga in general, into the context of tribal life. It is a somewhat curious essay full of excerpts from traditions and Cook Voyage accounts. Her theme is basically that "names, knowledge, ancestors, treasures, and land are so closely intertwined in tribal thinking that they should never be separated." She recognises an irony in that so little is known of the history of the individual taonga in the Te Maori exhibition, but then implies that one of the reasons for this is that they have been held in museums for too long. This may well be so, but I believe it is unarguable that had they not been held and looked after in museums, they would certainly not have been available for Te Maori or for any other exhibition, and the Maori community, and the world in general would have been much the poorer.

Bernie Kernot provides some useful information on a selection of nineteenth century master wood carvers, and Piri Sciascia rounds off the first, the larger, part of the book with a short discourse on the current renaissance of Maoritanga, placing much importance on the value of the Maori language.

The second part of the book is an illustrated catalogue of all the pieces in the Te Maori exhibition. Beside each photograph is the name of the object in English and in Maori, the material from which it is made, its size, place or origin, tribe and other details. Some of the data and accompanying remarks are a little imaginative, but of the whole this catalogue would be a useful adjunct to the exhibition and an interesting record of the pieces chosen and sent away from the New Zealand collections. Fifty of the artefacts are also reproduced in a larger format and in colour, and I have little doubt that many people will buy the book for these and the catalogue alone.

I have not been to the New York exhibition myself, but the photographs, the television items (how many times have we seen the opening?) and the published accounts of it that I have seen give me the feeling of coldness. I know that people who have visited the exhibition have been impressed, but these examples of Maori craftsmanship are surely more than lifeless pieces of primitive art to be displayed in the rather soulless halls of an art gallery. They seem to be out of place, out of context, deprived from the associations that make them taonga rather than just works of art. Hopefully though, this book which is published in conjunction with the exhibition, will go some way to redressing the balance and directing attention to the place of the taonga in Maori culture and tradition. I am happy that Maori art has been recognised and valued by such famous institutions in the United States. I will be happier still to see Te Maori exhibited in New Zealand; but I must confess that I will be most happy when the taonga are returned to our museums where they will be regarded as a whole lot more than art works or works of art.

There are many minor faults in Te Maori, but they are minor, and for the most part detract little from a useful, valuable and indeed cogitative text. There are some inconsistencies in terminology, some confusion of place names, and some errors of fact. The latter are particularly in regard to South Island prehistory - which may reflect a North Island bias in the writers, or alternatively a South Island bias in this reviewer to whom they are so noticeable! I have to mention that the one illustration of a Maori rock drawing is printed upsidown, but I suppose the publishers are in good company when certain prestigious New Zealand organisations (that shall remain nameless) deliberately reproduce them in unnatural positions!

Te Maori, the book, will not be overshadowed by any coffee-table publication on Polynesian art. But it is a great deal more than that. It is an important statement on Maori art,

tradition and culture, and as such it should be read, if not owned, by everyone professing to have any interest in New Zealand's cultural past.

Michael Trotter

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John Wilson (editor), New Zealand's Industrial Past. New Zealand Historic Places Trust (Publication No. 20), Wellington, 1984. 64 pp., illustrations. \$12.00.

This handsomely produced publication is sub-titled, "Papers presented at a seminar on industrial archaeology in New Zealand, Christchurch, 29-30 March 1983". It consists of fifteen short papers on aspects of New Zealand's industrial history and archaeology. Geoffrey Thornton opens with an introductory essay on industrial history. There is then a section of six essays on particular sites or industries. Seven more deal with problems of research into, and management of, industrial sites. A final paper, by Jim McKinlay, seeks to define a programme for industrial archaeology in New Zealand.

There is some excellent material in this publication. Contributions on the timber industry (Paul Mahoney), the kauri timber and gum industries (Bruce Hayward and Jack Diamond) and Auckland brickmaking (Jack Diamond) give the background material essential to a study of artefacts and sites. The emphasis is historical. Perhaps this is unavoidable as the subject seeks to define its field; at some stage, however, attention will need to be focussed on archaeological description and comparison. We already have an excellent example of what might be done with Diamond and Hayward's work on kauri timber dams - where the sites themselves provide the essential information for the development of an historical sequence.

In the present work the two contributions which are based around particular archaeological remains are Joanne Smith's "The Staveley Lime Kilns", and Ray Hooker's "Historic sites of the Murray Creek goldfield". Even here, however, the standard of archaeological description is not high, confining itself in each case to a few paragraphs of text and photographs of parts of the sites. The historical research in Hooker's article especially, is of a high order, but we do not have yet an adequate published archaeological description of a West Coast goldfield.

The section of New Zealand's Industrial Past on problems of research into and management of industrial sites contains much of interest and importance. Neville Ritchie describes the Trust's programme in central Otago and the assessment, interpretation and presentation of goldfield and other sites. It is an excellent statement of present directions-and of lessons learnt, sometimes the hard way. Two further contributors on Central Otago are Tony Perrett's, "Managing the Otago Goldfields Park", and Nelson Cross's, "Stabilising and restoring historic industrial structures in the Otago Goldfields Park". Pioneering work on the presentation of industrial remains in Otago has a national importance. In other papers in this section George Mullenger outlines the requirements of adequate recording, Brian Wood briefly describes researching the history of the Brunner site, and David Hinman (Ferrymead) and Murray Thacker (Okains Bay) explain the role of industrial and pioneer museums.

New Zealand's Industrial Past is well presented in A4 format. It includes forty superbly reproduced photographs, historical and modern, which are always of a size sufficient to do justice to their fascinating subject matter. Perhaps there is more history than archaeology, and more site management and presentation than either, but this does not make for a dull book.

In his concluding contribution Jim McKinlay outlines some immediate needs for industrial archaeology in this country. More recently still the Historic Places Trust has reconsidered its own role in the field. Sponsoring regular seminars such as that which gave rise to the present book was one of the practical proposals made. If future meetings result in such stimulating - and rapid - publication they will be well worth while.

Nigel Prickett

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