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NEW ZEALAND ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER



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BOOK REVIEWS

Sharon Sullivan and Sandra Bowdler (eds), Site Surveys and Significance Assessment in Australian Archaeology. Canberra, Research School of Pacific Studies, Australian National University, 1984. 151 pp. A\$12.00.

This volume results from a symposium "assessing the significance of archaeological sites", held as part of the Australian Archaeological Association's annual conference in 1981. The participants generally draw on the statutory obligations, state and federal, and the current international literature, applying this to Australian site survey and management needs. The principal tests of significance discussed include relevance to a visiting public, and to Aborigines, current research problems, and representativeness to provide for potential research problems. Of these, the general discussions concerning significance and the papers on environmental and legislative frameworks will be of most interest to New Zealand readers.

The balance of the book (just over half the pages) is of fairly specific case studies which will be of less interest. Many address what is perceived to be the problem of sampling, and generate notions of significance from that. In virtually every case, theoretical options are clearly overtaken by operational necessities. There is no substitute for practical experience and a clear statement in any report of what was done so that subsequent researches or interpretations can adjust for any 'biases'.

The exposure and incidence of discovery of sites is one of the keys to understanding the nature of the material from which we derive prehistory. Two papers in the first part of the book by P.J. Hughes and M.E. Sullivan (of ANU's contracting company), and Dan Witter, address ways of dividing a region into culturally significant districts. The Hughes and Sullivan paper goes into some detail on the geomorphological processes which expose (or do not expose) archaeologically significant material, and relates them to acceptable choices of a pipeline route. Dan Witter does a similar exercise defining 29 'archaeological formations' for a much wider area, the states of Victoria and New South Wales. The Australian Heritage Commission would appear not to have solved this problem, and Josephine Flood's paper suggests tribal boundaries where these are known, and then division by biophysical regions (of which there are 300 in Australia: 59 in New South Wales and 9 in Tasmania). The paper is a useful and illuminating summary of the Heritage Commission's approach. Of 338 Aboriginal 'places' listed, incorporating 3,766 individual sites, there are 164 traditional sites, 2 massacre sites, 1973 art sites,

67 rock shelters, 772 shell middens, 393 open camp sites, 23 sets of grinding grooves, and 29 stone or ochre quarries, among others (this is not a complete list).

Two papers address historic site significance: one by Anne Bickford and Sharon Sullivan considers in particular the case of First Government House, Sydney; Michael Pearson's covers a good deal of the literature sensibly, including Connah's recent strictures on 'stamp-collecting' in the first issue of the Australian Journal of Historical Archaeology. Both are good value. John Clegg applies much dry wit to the subject of rock art, using as a basis an earlier formulation of Les Groube's Dorset Decays method. This is a fine paper; as is the lead paper to the collection, Sandra Bowdler on significance as a 'mutable quality'. This considers significance as it changes in the course of consolidating research results, with particular reference to some New South Wales middens.

All considered this is a book which every archaeologist dealing with site conservation should have. The first half is well written, based on much hard-won experience in the field and in offices. Anyone interested in the methodology of site surveying will also find much of interest. (Available from Bibliotech, G.P.O. Box 4, Canberra, A.C.T. 2601, Australia).

Kevin Jones

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Russell Beck, New Zealand Jade. Reed, Wellington, 1984. 173 pp., illustrations, appendices, glossary, bibliography, index. \$24.95.

In 1970 Russell Beck published an excellent little book of the same title as the present work. (It had a hard-cover and cost \$2.95). In the following years the 1970 book became almost unobtainable except at inflated prices in second-hand bookshops. Now, fifteen years after, there is a new book to fill the undoubted need among people of many particular interests and hobbies who come together in their love of our best known semi-precious stone.

New Zealand Jade is greatly expanded from the earlier book. It is copiously illustrated with 83 black-and-white photographs, 18 colour plates (many taken by Brian Brake) and 17 line drawings. Appendices cover the geological origin and physical properties of nephrite, jade look-alikes and world sources of jade. There is a useful glossary and bibliography.

The author treats his subjects in the same manner as in the earlier book. Chapters cover: terminology, New Zealand sources of jade, bowenite/tangiwai, Maori history and legends, Maori manufacturing techniques, and Maori artefacts, European lapidary and hints for lapidarians. The chapter on Maori lapidary techniques is of particular interest and is clearly the result

of many years practical experience, as well as study and experiment. Other chapters of more than usual interest for the reviewer include that on sources of New Zealand jade - especially those sections on the Otago and Southland fields which the author knows so well. There is communicated here a real sense of discovery. Special mention must also be made of the material on European lapidaries here and overseas. Our museums have many items among their Maori collections that have clearly been made, not by Maori craftsmen of old, but in the Dunedin workshops of William Dickson, John Laing, Frank Hyam and the Devlin brothers amongst others.

Russell Beck makes a plea for the word 'jade' rather than 'greenstone', arguing that the latter downgrades the material. He has a point, as the cheap copies of heitiki and other forms which fill our souvenir shops show only too well. His ambition that New Zealand become the leading jade carving centre of the world, drawing on the Maori heritage, might be fulfilled if the stone and its sources were valued and protected as the national treasures they are.

Nigel Prickett

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Geoffrey Irwin, Land, Pa and Polity. New Zealand Archaeological Association Monograph, 15. (1985). 118 pp, 70 figures, 16 plates, references. \$14.00.

Pouto is the district at the extremity of the north head of the Kaipara Harbour on the west coast of the North Island, north of Auckland. This monograph reports the results of a site survey of the district by Irwin and earlier workers, selected excavations, and a pioneering analysis and synthesis of the survey data, integrated with the results of the excavations. The emphasis in the volume is on the relationship of sites, particularly fortified sites, with the landscape and its resources. The subject is introduced by a review of site distributions in six other areas of the North Island. This generates some of the ideas developed further in the study of Pouto.

Plans and descriptions of 21 pa at Pouto are presented, and these are placed in context of the local topography and soils. The author can be complimented on the clarity of the plans in the volume and for the excellent photographs which lift the illustration of the sites and excavations above an already high standard.

Two of the sites were excavated, one showing a single period of occupation and revealing strong palisade and ditch and bank defences, while the second had at least two periods of occupation.

The first period was undefended while the second Irwin interprets as defended on the basis of scarps and a curiously discontinuous ditch. No palisade lines were found and the status of the site as a defended one must be questioned. The detailed excavation plan of trench 1 on site N33/243 does not explain two pits which occur on the site plan as falling within this trench. With this exception the reports on the excavations are illuminating if somewhat curt. Twelve of the sites have been dated by radiocarbon dating including one of the two excavated sites. The unexcavated sites have been dated by using materials sampled from chance exposures in eroded faces. Most of the sites date to less than 250 BP as reported by the laboratory. This late date of the cultural landscape at Pouto is unexpected, particularly when the long sequence found at the large site of Otakanini on the south Kaipara is compared.

The innovative part of this study is the spatial analysis applied to the data. Irwin is somewhat uncompromising in his presentation of this, and those uninitiated to some of the analytical tools he applies may find this section difficult. A complaint of new field workers in the past has been that there are few models to follow in the analysis of site survey data. This study removes once and for all that complaint. The pattern of the dates of the sites is compared with the resources of the area, the site distribution to the soils, to the proximity to the harbour coast or to the interior lakes, the varying distribution of pits defined and compared with the potential of the soils, while pa sites are studied for rank size distribution, connectivity, and area or influence. A nearest neighbour analysis is performed on both pa and other sites. Many of the relationships determined are convincing and in detail beyond summary in this review. One might question though if some of the conclusions are independent. If one geographic variable is related to one aspect of the cultural pattern, and a second geographic variable relates to another aspect then it is necessary to demonstrate that the two geographic variables are independent before putting both the relationships forward as conclusions, for the cultural patterns must be assumed to be related to each other. This underlying interrelationship makes sorting the cultural input to the landscape difficult.

The patterns of the cultural materials on the landscape determined in the analysis are linked to the geography in an empirical way. One wishes that the matter had been pursued further to codify rules to generate the Pouto cultural landscape, rules that could be tested, say, in the six other areas which introduce the study. However reference is made back to the latter in only one case. It may be the rules might be a good deal simpler than one imagines to describe most of the variability.

In any event the attempt would have been instructive.

Irwin sees the Macri use of the Pouto area as one which came (late) under increasing pressure through population increase and loss of good horticultural soils to invading dunes. The pa were a response to internal pressure and if an overall political structure existed it is not shown in the initial pa building. Over this structure came a few late large sites where larger agglomerations of people came together for defence, either in the face of external threat or as a response to internal pressure and reflecting more stratification than the response initially adopted.

Coincidentally four studies of areas of New Zealand with similar aims of examining and dating a number of pa have been proceeding in parallel, this and studies of Tauranga, Taranaki and East Coast. This is the first to be comprehensively reported. It sets a high standard for those to follow. The volume is printed from typescript with typeset figure and chapter titles.

Garry Law