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## ARCHAEOLOGY IN NEW ZEALAND



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BOOK REVIEWS

Thompson, Paul (1989) Maori Rock Art: An Ink That Will Stand Forever. Government Printer, Wellington. 96 pp. \$29.95 paperback, \$45.95 hardback.

This publication is the result of few brief visits to the limestone areas of South Canterbury and North Otago Maori Rock Drawing sites by National Film Unit cameraman Paul Thompson. The book consists of a collection of numerous illustrations, plates, and colour photographs, a text by the author, a Maori incantation (from a previous Oamaru rock drawing exhibition), and a Hone Tuwhare poem. Karen Williams, the Wellington illustrator, obviously didn't visit the sites. A silver, "taniwha" motif reproduced back to front is taken from the well-known Opihi River three taniwha composition.

To explain the odd mixed metaphorical title the author writes that the reference is made "more to the marks left in history by various commentators than to the actual pigments used". These actual pigments used are fading fast and will certainly not last forever. There are quotations from such commentators as the scientist Julius Von Haast ("The Recent Past"), artist Theo Schoon ("The More Recent Past"), and modern archaeologists Michael Trotter and Beverley McCulloch ("Into The Present").

Thompson's aim in the other sections is "not to present a scientific or ethnographic interpretation of the images but rather a reverential look at their forms and figures and the landscape which may have helped to create them". So the reader finds plenty of the author's rather superficial conjecture, and a heavy dependence on Maori legends, customs and history. The latter approach is unacceptable as many of the charcoal and red ochre drawings were drawn long ago and the local Kaitahu people acknowledge that they know little about the "taonga" on their former tribal lands or the artists themselves. Nor is there any scientific evidence that other pigments as suggested by Thompson were used for the drawings page 90. There is a laboured emphasis on cave drawings when most sites are actually shallow limestone shelters. The writing style ranges from chunks of turgid twaddle, to silly statements, padding and inappropriate slang. The aim of the book appears less to be "informing New Zealanders" (the publisher's logo), than the author's "sharing" of his response to the landscape.

The book's best feature is Thompson's 35 superb colour photographs though only 19 focus on actual drawings (from accessible, well-known sites), the remainder are mostly of lovely limestone landscape features and display the author's photographic skill. Numerous rock drawing illustrations,

copied or traced by Karen Williams, are from photographs by A. Hamilton, W.R.B. Oliver, J.T. Salmon, and Theo Schoon - all held in the National Museum. Drawings by Schoon and tracings by Trotter and McCulloch at the Canterbury Museum have also been used. Selected motifs scattered throughout the book include, surprisingly, portions of an Opihi taniwha's stylised feet, so out of context when the bold scale and sophisticated design of the three Opihi taniwha excite the visitor as a complete composition best not dismembered.

The problem though is that, with the exception of Schoon, most past North Island photographers (including Thompson) have made only brief field trips and have photographed only about eight of the best known North and South Canterbury or North Otago sites. So the selection is pretty narrow. The unindexed plates omit information about the exact type of source (tracing, photograph, or drawings), and often the people responsible for the work.

A depressing lack of familiarity with the subject matter, and with the variety of less known sites, is displayed by the frequently incorrect, inadequate, or even absence of captions under most plates and some colour photographs of sites and drawings. Examples abound, page 6 plate is probably taken from a Salmon photograph of the Hazelburn, South Canterbury, figures. Page 14 should read Frenchman's Gully not Elworthy's. Page 22 Ngapora should read Ngapara and is from a Canterbury tracing by Trotter/McCulloch. "Bird monster" is in North Otago not South Canterbury. "Indistinct Group" is reproduced upside down and in reverse, and is from Dog Rock, Cave, South Canterbury. Moreover those figures are quite distinct, unlike so many, owing to Theo Schoon's selective retouching. Where, for the reader's benefit, is Tukutuku, pages 58, 76 and 77? Which drawing is the right way up, those on pages 49 and 58 or the photograph on page 77, let the reader guess? Page 59 drawing is copied from a photograph of the original limestone block held in the Otago Museum collection. On page 69 the "crescent" is generally accepted as being one of several lively stylised dogs, at Hanging Rock. The page 61 attribution puzzled, as Schoon (and Salmon) who photographed the huge taniwha composition lacked the equipment and expertise to splice the drawings satisfactorily. South Canterbury photographer Brian High succeeded for "The Drawings of Ancient Times" exhibition, March 1988, at the National Museum.

Poorly researched and edited, and so full of errors, this book is obviously hurriedly assembled. The brief, selective (and slightly sensationalist) index and bibliography disappoints. Worst of all, there is no map. Of such limited appeal, this book is best left on the bookseller's shelf, or in the Government Printer's store. Far better information is found elsewhere in artist Michael Dunn's articles, or books

such as Trotter and McCulloch's Prehistoric Rock Art In New Zealand.

Phillipa Graham

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Michael Trotter and Beverley McCulloch (1989) Unearthing New Zealand. Government Printer, Wellington. 128 pp. \$44.95.

When Canterbury Museum Director Michael Trotter's application to the 1990 commission was initially declined, disappointment was keenly felt. The objective was to mount an archaeological exhibition and publish a complementary book with Beverley McCulloch as co-author. Trotter and McCulloch nevertheless proceeded with a book as they felt that a book for the general reader would sell as interest in New Zealand archaeology increases. Fortunately a reduced grant also enabled the exhibition to go ahead, with successful displays on similar lines to the short chapters or 'cameos' in the book.

The book is divided into three sections: the Origin of the Maoris, the First Immigrants - from Moa Hunters to Classic Maori, and the European Period. The authors pronounced South Island bent is evident in the wealth of interesting South Island sites discussed. This balances the recent, numerous publications on North Island archaeology. Findings and theories on the origins of the moa hunters by geologists Julius Von Haast and Frederick Hutton are described and lead on into the work and methods of archaeologists such as Roger Duff and Les Lockerbie.

Accounts of the move away from artefact archaeology, to the use of radiocarbon dating for accurately determining site age and the interest in the interpretation of horticultural sites, are worthwhile. As well, the development of modern archaeological methods has led to the realisation that today's archaeologists must be familiar with a variety of sciences including the earth sciences and anatomy. This is illustrated by the Trotter and McCulloch special project "The Fyffe Site (Kaikoura) and Modern Archaeology" where the author's employed "a number of diverse techniques and disciplines ...probably the most important being geology" for the interpretation of their excavated findings at the site.

The four attractive coloured diagrammatic representations are entirely Trotter and McCulloch interpretations, although many readers may be unaware of the covert controversy which exists about the site. Trotter and McCulloch's reconstructions differ from other published descriptions of the site, and they have published little evidence in support of their own interpretations.

Many will not agree whole-heartedly with the approach to the question of Polynesian migration in Section One. The authors ignore Maori sources and rely on eighteenth century Europeans accounts, linguistic experts, and an anthropologist yachtsman for discussion. Hence the reader finds implicit dismissal by Trotter and McCulloch of Maori oral traditions about voyaging and particularly the idea of deliberate return voyaging between New Zealand and the original islands more than 500 years ago. Today there is enough evidence to seriously question this approach. However, the authors manage to present many sided arguments without explicitly giving their own conclusions.

Trotter and McCulloch do seem to favour single rather than multiple settlement (page 31) but this implies an obligatory introduction and cultivation of plants such as kumara from the earliest settlement. This explains their emphasis on "early" features which can be cited as evidence of kumara cultivation such as the "garden walls" on the southern banks of the Clarence river (see pages 57 and 72). Multiple settlement and the introduction of plants and animals by later arrivals are not considered as possibilities by the authors. The artefact evidence, such as the tropical pearl shell lure found at the AD 500 Tairua site, Coromandel (page 31), is dismissed.

In Section Three eight contributors focus on a variety of European archaeological topics. These round off the book nicely and include whalers and sealers, missionaries, the first Auckland gaol, and a timely article on marine archaeology which will hopefully deter divers from plundering the abundance of coastal wrecks. Final subjects covered are 1860s Maori fortifications, a well written contribution by Geoffrey Thornton on industrial archaeology (although his two poorly focussed prints were unexpected), and an account of the recent excavations of Cromwell's Chinatown. This concluding section then, provides satisfactory evidence of the archaeological maturity of this country.

The excellent selection of photographs, Geoffrey Cox's well drawn illustrations, and the maps outweigh the deficiencies in the writing which lacks liveliness and originality. Despite the good balance of text to illustration, long sentences overloaded with facts or ideas could prevent the younger reader from becoming engrossed in the book. One finds only hints of stimulating differences and controversy in this well designed and produced book. Ideal as a text book (selected for Otago University first year anthropology students 1990) and well indexed, this book is selling steadily and is recommended for all types of library collections.

Phillipa Graham

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