



NEW ZEALAND
ARCHAEOLOGICAL
ASSOCIATION

ARCHAEOLOGY IN NEW ZEALAND



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'BURNING ISSUES' IN NEW ZEALAND ARCHAEOLOGY

Notes from discussions held at the New Zealand Archaeological Association Conference, Whangarei, May 1994.

Group 1.

- A. Now that we have some well scrutinised C14 dates with many sites now acceptably dated, can we put some of the hypotheses about resource development and depletion, population logistics, warfare, polity and rank into forms where they are testable against the dating evidence?
- B. Settlement of the inland North Island is little known as to timing and character. A virgin field for research?
- C. Our perspective of communication is land based rather than watercraft based. We should look to this different perception in spatial analysis and survey design.
- D. Spatial analysis has made few recent advances and has not picked up on examples from overseas literature.
- E. There is a need to develop better mechanisms for achieving continuity of a research approach from within the mitigation work which dominates a lot of activity.
- F. The historic period from 1770 - 1860 is being approached predominantly from a European perspective in looking at colonist sites. There also needs to be a Maori perspective.
- G. Models for exchange mechanism and trade are not well developed and tested against the data.
- H. Bone material presence/absence records are being accepted much too uncritically. There is very little research on taphonomy, yet it is potentially very important. Regional soil characteristics may have regional effects.
- I. The Kaitaia lintel find site is known but has never been studied.
- J. Fiordland early historic sites have good potential for research as they are very little disturbed by later occupation.

Garry Law

BURNING ISSUES IN NEW ZEALAND ARCHAEOLOGY

Group 2.

This group identified several issues concerning

- A. the subject matter of archaeology itself, and
 - B. the conduct of the discipline.
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- A.
 1. **Date of First Settlement** - there appears to be no middle ground probably because the protagonists are using different bodies of knowledge;
 2. **The Protohistoric Period** is still poorly understood as archaeologists tend to concentrate on prehistoric Maori sites or historic European sites;
 3. **The Regional Gaps**, e.g. inland North Island, Raglan, for which we have insufficient site records and archaeological evidence.
 - B.
 1. The **Status of Historic Archaeology** seems to be lagging behind that of prehistoric archaeology despite the amount of research time now invested in historic archaeology.
 2. **Information Dissemination** - more liaison between DOC, NZHPT, museums and universities is required so that NZAA members, especially student members, can find out about funding sources, access to collections and reports etc.
 3. **The Importance of Research** - all institutions involved in archaeology/ heritage management should have research recognized as an integral component of their objectives. There was general agreement that research-based investigations contribute valuable stimuli to the progress of the discipline, encouraging debate and enthusiasm which in turn arouse public interest and support. As a venue for presenting the results of archaeological research and current projects, the NZAA Conference is a vital event to keep the discipline in good heart.

Helen Leach

Group 3.

After some discussion regarding specific areas of research requiring further attention (these are itemised below), the group agreed that perhaps the most important issue was one of consolidation. There was a general perception that a great deal of research has been conducted over recent years, oriented toward either geographically specific, site type specific or material specific problems.

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Perhaps now is the time to pull a lot of this material together in a series of regional reviews. Such reviews would not only consolidate disparate pieces of work into cohesive overviews, they more than likely will highlight gaps in our knowledge and provide us with guidelines for the design of future research projects.

Following this theme of consolidation, review and future planning, a number of specific issues were raised

- A. A burning imperative to publish recent, important work;
- B. Co-ordination of human resources, particularly of University Departments and their postgraduate research programmes. Human resources are often more of a problem than money and it may be possible for academic supervisors to steer postgraduate students toward projects co-ordinated with other universities which focus on broader geographical areas. These areas would be identified in the regional review process as requiring new/more investigation;
- C. More research into the number and origin of source colonisers. Is there a possibility that the degree of variation within New Zealand (technological, biological, material culture) is great enough to indicate multiple sources?
- D. More research into spatial analysis and settlement patterning within early/archaic sites;
- E. More research into the relationship between horticultural intensification and the development of social intensification and diversification;
- F. A need for well directed research aimed at the earliest (pre 1840) period of European colonisation;
- G. More of a focus on issues relating to Maori material and social change during the earliest European contact period;
- H. Political issues inhibiting the investigation of New Zealand prehistoric archaeology, and the observation by one member of the group that prehistoric archaeologists are fleeing to historic archaeology in droves. This should be seen not just as an issue impacting on research, but as a research issue in its own right.

Mike Green

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Group 4.

My group was mainly students so their perception of important issues may be different from other groups and more aligned to their theoretical studies.

Issues as they were raised and not in order of importance:

1. Are population sizes of sites and areas affected by economy and/or environmental constraints?
2. Chronology - first landings and appearance of pa. Are there regional variations?
3. Are there regional differences in artefact assemblages? Can Skinner's differences be refined?
4. Can settlement patterns and landscape archaeology fit into ecological and environmental models?
5. The relationship between archaeology and ethnography.
6. Is archaeology serving the needs of the Maori people? RMA means Maori involvement has changed and their views are stronger - are archaeologists doing the sort of work that Maori people want?
7. Is there within site planning? Is this the same New Zealand-wide?
8. Is there a division between historic and prehistoric archaeologists?
9. Is contract archaeology going to become an issue now that Auckland University is becoming involved? And if so, what about vetting?
10. What is the proper repository for artefacts and raw data?
11. No systematic approach New Zealand-wide to historic archaeology.
12. Is there a dichotomy between biological studies and natural and cultural environments? e.g. Motutapu revegetation.

Brenda Sewell