



NEW ZEALAND  
ARCHAEOLOGICAL  
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## ARCHAEOLOGY IN NEW ZEALAND



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## **Obituary**

### **Yosihiko Sinoto (1924-2017)**

Yosihiko Sinoto (widely known as Yosi) was born in Japan in 1924 and died recently in Honolulu at the age of 93. In 1954, after studying in Japan, he set off for Berkeley, California, to further his studies in archaeology. On the way, he stopped in Honolulu and, as one writer has put it, was “shanghaied” by Kenneth Emory of the Bishop Museum, joining the staff of the Museum as Emory’s assistant. He excavated with Emory at South Point and soon made his first notable contribution with a study of Hawaiian fishhooks. He obtained a BA from the University of Hawai‘i in 1958, and returned to Japan to obtain his doctorate at Hokkaido in 1962. He spent the best part of 60 years at the Bishop Museum, becoming Chairman of the Anthropology Department in 1970, and was appointed to the Kenneth P. Emory Distinguished Chair in Anthropology in 1989. He officially retired in 2013 but continued to come in to the Museum until the beginning of this year.



*Emory and Sinoto at Maupiti*

### *Sinoto Obituary*

He went with Emory to the Society Islands in 1960, and worked there on and off for 40 years. His first major excavation was the Maupiti burial ground in 1962. In 1964-5 he excavated at Hane on Uahuka in the Marquesas, where he challenged Suggs' then recent work at Ha'atuatua on Nukuhiva.

Perhaps even more important, was his work at the partly waterlogged site of Vaito'otia/Fa'ahia on Huahine, excavated on four occasions between 1973 and 1977. It was here that two whale bone patu and a wooden one were found, very similar to Māori examples. Other discoveries included remains of what could be reconstructed as a 65-foot-long canoe. In later years, Yosi was involved in aspects of marae restoration and maintenance in the Society Islands.



*Sinoto at Huahine*

With his contacts in Japan, Yosi was instrumental in organising a Pacific archaeology session at the 11<sup>th</sup> Pacific Science congress in Japan in 1966, the proceedings of which were published by the Bishop Museum in 1968.

Yosi was a meticulous excavator and an expert on material culture, notably but not only, fishhooks. Although he was not an archaeozoologist, his retention methods were such that he retrieved large quantities of faunal remains. An extinct bird found at Hane was named *Vini sinotoi* in his honour.

### *Sinoto Obituary*

He received numerous awards, including the Order of Tahitinui, the Japanese Order of Rising Sun, The Society of Hawaiian Archaeology's Nakeikaho Cultural Stewardship Award and Bishop Museum's Robert J. Pfeiffer Medal.

Yosi's wife, Kasuko, a historian of immigration died in 2013. They are survived by their son, Aki, who works at the Bishop Museum, and three grandsons.

#### **On a personal note:**

Foss first came across Yosi in 1964 when he visited Dunedin and gave a lecture to the Otago Anthropological Society about his research in Eastern Polynesia. Of special interest was the artefacts from Maupiti, with close parallels in New Zealand. He presented a critical review of Carl Suggs' research at Ha'atuatua. He immediately impressed me with his scholarly attention to detail and determination to correct interpretations that he disagreed with. I was just a student at the time, and during his stay in Dunedin there was ample opportunity to talk with him in person about archaeology in general. I was impressed with his generosity in sharing information with young students. Over the years since then, any requests for information about his research have been immediately followed by sending copies of articles, original photographs, even copies of research applications for funding, not normally shared with colleagues. This showed great openness in scholarship not always found in academia.

Janet first met Yosi in 1962, when he and Kenneth Emory cycled around the island of Mo`orea, where I was working with Roger Green, who was rather derisory about their survey methods. On various subsequent meetings, in Samoa and in Honolulu (where he introduced me to a sushi bar for the first time), I always found him modest, knowledgeable and helpful – a thoroughly nice person.

*Janet Davidson and Foss Leach*