



NEW ZEALAND  
ARCHAEOLOGICAL  
ASSOCIATION

## ARCHAEOLOGY IN NEW ZEALAND



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## PRINCIPLES AND CODES OF ETHICS: COMMENT

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In the last issue of *Archaeology in New Zealand* (Volume 42[1]:3-36), Rick McGovern-Wilson and Tony Walton presented Codes of Ethics and Standards for the Practice of Professional Archaeology in New Zealand. This set of ethics has been adopted by NZAA Council and was voted on at the NZAA Conference.

There are three sections: Principle of Archaeological Ethics (taken from Society for American Archaeology 1996), Code of Professional Ethics (revised from Society of Professional Archaeologists U.S.A 1976), and Standards of Research Performance (also from SPA 1976). In undertaking such a task the authors acknowledge the desire of the now disbanded Institute of New Zealand Archaeologists that effort should be put into articulating and maintaining ethics and good practice in New Zealand Archaeology: one of the key functions of INZA. As one of the founding members of INZA, a current member of the NZAA and a practising Consultant Archaeologist, I fully endorse their efforts. However, the document shows its mixed, aged and foreign origins. There are notable omissions and inconsistencies. Therefore, I strongly advocate that several changes should be made.

The most significant omission is that of any reference to Maori concerns. While there are procedures in the Historic Places Act and the Resource Management Act, these should be firmly stated within the ethics. In the Principles, No 2 should be rewritten to make Maori the main focus of accountability, as all land areas and at least 95% of sites relate to Maori in some way, an acknowledgement of their role as tangata whenua is essential. In the Code of Ethics the second Responsibility should also be to iwi. In the Standards of Research, liaison with iwi should be stated. Iwi whom I have talked to about the subject say that the most important factors for them are: the attitude of the archaeologist, a successful liaison process, the type of

work to be done and why, the disposal of material - artefactual and koiwi, and the interpretation of the findings and access to the information (including the language it is written in). These valid concerns have to be addressed within this document.

The second serious omission is the requirement of archaeologists to deposit all material with a professional body (in practice many consultants do not lodge their survey reports with NZAA filekeepers). Some clients looking at the Code of Ethics section which states that "an archaeologist shall not reveal confidential information", will insist that any sites located and plans which might affect sites should not be made public. The Principles do not make a strong enough point in regard to this issue.

Although there is reference to housing of artefacts in museums (see Antiquities Act) in the Standards, this is not mentioned in the Principles. No 7 might usefully be rewritten to accommodate this omission, and include the disposal of koiwi, as well as the housing of taonga, other artefacts and archaeological records.

There are inconsistencies in the ordering of the Principles and Codes. In the former professional concerns come first, followed by the public whereas the reverse is true in the Codes. I suggest that the order should be the profession, iwi, public and clients. There is a curious Principle about commercialism. How many archaeologists sell obsidian flakes, but maybe in America....? I think this could be deleted: certainly it does not need to go in at No 3.

I endorse the efforts of the NZAA in forming these Principles, Codes and Standards, however I feel strongly that they need to be rewritten to: (i) accommodate New Zealand responsibilities to tangata whenua (reference to Treaty of Waitangi will not do, it has to be throughout the document); (ii) New Zealand conditions whereby most archaeological work at present is done by archaeological consultants; and (iii) be internally consistent.

I have many other more minor points and suggestions, and would be pleased to pass these on to the authors or assist in any way possible to complete the task. I also urge all other members to read the first few pages (4-14) and consider what changes they feel might be necessary (Yes I know it was broadcast on e-mail previously, but even some of those members who had seen that and voted at Conference had not read it).