



NEW ZEALAND  
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**NEW ZEALAND ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER**



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R E V I E W S.

"APPROACH TO ARCHAEOLOGY". Stuart Piggott.<sup>1</sup> (A. & C. Black 1959)

Simplicity is the keynote of this very readable and attractively written book. As it is addressed principally to beginners who wish to learn something of the basis of archaeology, Professor Piggott has avoided using the technical language associated with this study, which means of course that those readers unacquainted with archaeology will not find it necessary to consult their dictionaries every few lines. But besides this use of non-technical language, Professor Piggott has attempted to present in a clear and straightforward manner some of the techniques and problems (many of which are highly complex) with which the modern archaeologist is faced, and in this he is successful. Perhaps this is most clearly seen in the third chapter, "Making Time-Scales", wherein he gives a short account of some of the different methods at present employed in establishing the date of archaeological sites and the materials excavated from these sites. As anyone who is acquainted with such writers as Zeuner will realise, this study in itself is complicated and does not make for easy reading, yet Professor Piggott presents a straightforward and interesting account of these quite involved methods. For example there is a short explanation of Radiocarbon dating. Obviously this explanation is far from comprehensive, but then it does not claim to be; instead it conveys to the beginner, in terms which he will be able to understand, the principles of this somewhat intricate method of dating the past.

Some indication is given of the scope of archaeology and perhaps more important still, its limits. The importance of the relationship to archaeology of the natural sciences and the results obtained by the co-operation of these disciplines is emphasised. For if we hope to learn as much as we possibly can about the past then archaeology by itself will at its best only give us a very incomplete and scanty picture, but with the special skills of the petrologist, the palaeobotanist, and the zoologist, to mention a few, a far more comprehensive picture of the past can be gained.

Professor Piggott impresses on his readers the undesirability, if not the dangers, of attempting to deduce and infer from archaeological evidence more than it in its nature can give; in other words, that the information which we can logically derive from

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archaeological material is strictly limited. That too many have failed to heed this warning in the past is only too clearly seen in such questions as the settlement of Polynesia, for which a number of conflicting and incompatible theories have been advanced to account for the origin of the present inhabitants of these islands, and in every instance the propagator of each particular theory has claimed to have 'proved' his case by archaeological evidence.

After indicating the restrictions, Professor Piggott gives some guide as to how to make the best use of the evidence available. He gives another timely warning, however, and points out that we, living in an age when much emphasis is placed on technological achievement, should not form judgements of prehistoric societies solely in the light of their technologies, for it does not follow that the society with the most highly developed techniques is necessarily superior to one which shows less technological aptitude.

There is, of course, as Professor Piggott is aware, the likelihood of a certain amount of distortion when attempting to give a simplified account of something which is more complex; to a certain extent this is true of this book and for this reason more advanced readers of archaeology may feel this to be an unsatisfactory feature. To the beginner in this field of study, however, this book will be helpful in giving a broad outline of the discipline of archaeology.

P. Gardner.

"HAWAIIAN ARCHAEOLOGY: FISHHOOKS". K.D. Emory, W.J. Bonk, and Y. Sinoto (Bishop Museum Publication 47, 1959).

This is a study of over 4,000 complete and fragmentary fishhook specimens excavated at 33 archaeological sites in the Hawaiian Islands. Since 1950 a considerable amount of field work has been carried out by the Bishop Museum and this is the first detailed account to be published.

After giving locations of the various sites, the number, sizes, and varieties of hooks from each are tabulated and shown on graphs. Graphs and diagrams are used very effectively throughout to show frequency-distribution of hooks according to size, materials, stratigraphy, and age respectively. These are a feature of the publication and are supported by tables and in the script.

Terminology used in describing the hooks is very satisfactory, and the use of separate terms for Two-piece and for Composite varieties is welcomed; the latter term being applied to trolling and lure hooks, while the term Two-piece is self explanatory.

The system adopted for classifying the material is somewhat elaborate, but necessarily so for the study which has been made. It is prepared especially for use with the types of hooks described, and as it stands would not be entirely suitable in New Zealand. Personally, I find that describing a hook as 111E3(2)Cb1d1b is a little confusing, but I do appreciate the need for a system of shorthand, as it were, for record purposes.... the above conglomeration meaning "A Pearl-shell point for a bonito hook with an inner barb and a single perforation at a flat-faced base".

Two factors, namely radiocarbon dates and the large quantities of hooks (over 3,000) from one locality, enabled the writers to make a careful comparison of features from upper and lower archaeological levels in this area. The earliest radiocarbon date is A.D. 124  $\pm$  60, and there is a rather large jump to the next of A.D. 957  $\pm$  200. However Hawaii appears to have been well inhabited by this later date, (there are a number of dates after A.D. 1,000), and the authors are no doubt safe in assuming occupation for at least fifteen hundred years. Changes in hook design over this period have been gradual, the greatest being in points of Two-piece hooks; those having a notched base being common at lower levels, but practically absent above, while the reverse was the case with those having a knobbed base. Shanks for Two-piece hooks followed the same distribution as the Knobbed-base points, showing that notched points must have been lashed to wooden shanks which have not survived. Another change was in barbs .... both shank and point barbs being present in all strata with a higher proportion of barbed to un-barbed hooks in lower levels than in those above.

In these and in many other details the publication will be of much interest to New Zealand students. It is produced in an attractive and convenient format, and the plates of material -- manufacturing tools as well as hooks etc. -- are excellent, though more care could have been taken in the preparation of two views of excavations.

M.M. Trotter.