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REVIEWS

Louise Furey. *Houhora: A Fourteenth Century Maori Village in Northland.* Bulletin of the Auckland Museum 19, 2002. 169 pp. \$35.

This bulletin represents Auckland Museum's latest contribution to the curing of archaeological 'hangovers'—site and collection details that should have been published much closer to the time of their excavation or discovery. It joins Louise Furey's (1996) monograph on Oruarangi, Chris Jacomb's study of the Banks Peninsula site of Panau (Canterbury Museum, 2000), and a handful of retrospective journal articles dealing with sites such as Waioneke, Kauri Point, and Maungarei, excavated in the 1960–70s.

But as with the hangovers suffered by archaeologists themselves, the inevitable memory loss of the participants makes the task of assembling the details much more difficult. As well, provenance data can be separated from artefacts and lost. In the case of Houhora, artefacts survive from private collections made when the site was a shingle quarry in the 1960s, and from excavations conducted in the summer of 1965–6 and 1972 by members of the Anthropology Department, University of Auckland and the Auckland Institute and Museum. One brief, preliminary report appeared in the N.Z.A.A. Newsletter in 1966, jointly written by Noel Roe (the Masters student who directed the 1965–6 excavation) and his supervisor Wilfred Shawcross. The following year Roe's thesis provided some discussion of the stratigraphy and selected artefacts, while Shawcross (1972) used the faunal identifications from the site in his calculations of community size from faunal remains. Particular components of the midden were examined by later researchers, but Shawcross's departure for the Australian National University in 1973 saw work on the Houhora material effectively cease.

By then it was apparent from the few publications that there were discrepancies in the records of the excavation and differences between supervisor and student over the interpretation of the layers, not helped, in my view, by the Jarmo-like grid pattern of baulks left between the squares. Furey makes only oblique reference to the fate of some of the data and I searched hard to find the information that while Shawcross had "generously handed over his records"

(p. ix) for this study, the field notebooks of the director, Roe were not located (pp. 13, 121).

Louise Furey has performed a remarkable salvage operation on the available data, despite the unresolved problem of which layers constituted separate occupations. Roe had supported an interpretation of the lower layers (2b and below) as having been formed by multiple seasonal camps, while Shawcross promoted the view that these layers represented the occupation of a very large village, of which only some 2% had been excavated. As the title of this monograph indicates, Furey argues for the presence of a single Archaic village, of smaller size than Shawcross envisaged, with activity areas changing during the course of its occupation. This is not based so much on structural evidence such as postholes, which defied interpretation as substantial houses, but on the great diversity of artefacts and manufacturing activities, and the lack of any obvious hiatus between Layers 3 and 2b. The artefacts included tattooing chisels, ornaments and teka darts, which would not be expected to be found in seasonal camps specialising in food procurement and processing.

Anderson and Smith's views on Murihiku Archaic settlement patterns, and the re-interpretation of the Shag Mouth site as a village, appear to have influenced Furey's thinking on Houhora. Though the case for long term 'permanent' occupation is well set out, there are dangers inherent in the polarization of sites into 'permanent villages' or 'seasonal camps'. As Anne Salmond has noted, there is ethnographic evidence from Rangaunu in the Far North of regular population movements to summer fishing 'villages', rather more substantial than temporary camps.

The Houhora volume starts with a brief introduction to the physical setting, and to the historical and archaeological context of the site (Ch. 1). It then provides a resumé of the collections which were available for analysis (Ch. 2), which reveals that Houhora was unusually rich in ornaments, fishing gear and the tools needed to manufacture it, in bone chisels and awls, and to a lesser extent in adzes. Then follows Chapter 3 on the excavations, in which the photographs, sections and plans tantalise with visions of what might have been revealed with better methods. In general this evidence supports Furey's doubts concerning the integrity of much of the Layer 2a material as recorded by the excavators. Nevertheless she accepts that in part of the site this layer contained material from a separate later occupation, supported by one radiocarbon date and five obsidian hydration rim estimates.

The emphasis of the report then shifts to the analysis of the numerous artefacts, starting with imitation whale tooth pendants, reel units, drilled teeth and bone beads (Ch. 4). Sadly, the majority of these were not recovered archaeologically. For example, of the eight illustrated imitation whaletooth pendants, only one can be assigned to a square and layer. We are told that four reel units were found in Layer 2b but it is not stated whether any of these are among those illustrated. Thus we have to take on trust statements that ascribe these to the Archaic period. Under the circumstances I find it hard to accept Furey's confident assertion that the Houhora collection "demonstrates manufacture of reels and imitation whale tooth ornaments in a firmly dated occupation context" (p. 46). They are likely to be of Archaic age, but strictly speaking this can only be confirmed with items from the excavated layers. Though precise provenance data are lacking for many artefacts, Furey provides us with valuable information on their wider context. She systematically reviews East Polynesian forms in use about the same period, providing us with an abiding sense of Houhora as part of a Polynesian oceanic world.

Chapter 5 begins with a particularly interesting report on the moa bone and ivory chisels found at Houhora, which experimental work by Dante Bonica suggests may have been used in shaping wood. The tools proved surprisingly strong, were more readily re-sharpened than their stone counterparts, and more amenable to use with a mallet. Possible Polynesian precedents occur in the Marquesas and Cook Islands. Bone points and awls were also prevalent at Houhora, and there were five examples of the extremely rare teka dart head rendered in ivory and bone.

Fishing gear was dominated by one piece hooks and Chapter 6 should be essential reading for anyone wrestling with the function-style dichotomy, as well as trying to visualize the steps in fish hook manufacture. With justification Furey notes that "Analysed in conjunction with the faunal results, the hooks contribute significantly to understanding the use of one-piece fishhooks" (p. 56). Houhora fishermen caught snapper to such an extent that they make up 91% of the large archaeological 'catch'. While the presence of a few other species explains the manufacture of trolling lures and a few very large and very small hooks, the conclusion cannot be avoided that the inhabitants made both rotating and jabbing hooks to catch one main species, and that one basic parallel-sided tab provided the template for both types of hook. Not only that, the rotating hook could be turned into a jabbing form, and there is considerable convergence in shape, to the extent that it is sometimes difficult to decide whether hooks with just the point tips missing were originally jabbing or rotating. Variation in head form is

also marked, despite the single species focus. Just as contemporary fly fishermen vary their lures to attract just two species of trout, we may be looking at individual or family preferences for prehistoric hook forms thought to be irresistible to snapper.

Although the Archaic occupants of Houhora had plenty of bone or ivory as raw material for artefact manufacture, suitable stone resources were less easily obtained. Much has been made of their connections with the Coromandel as a source of Tahanga basalt for adzes and chert for flakes. Re-analysis in Chapter 7 and 8 suggests this dependency has been over-stated, and that there had been significant exploration and utilisation of rocks from both local and wider east coast Northland sources. However the Tahanga basalt was clearly highly valued and, in the same way as Nelson argillites were refurbished and recycled at Shag River Mouth in Otago, Houhora adzes of Tahanga basalt were reshaped until they were no longer serviceable as adzes or chisels. This suggests that the site occupants had no expectation of fresh supplies arriving during the course of their occupation.

Chapter 8 also discusses a variety of other stone items, including possible plane-rasps, hammerstones, drill points and files. Considering the large numbers of drills and files, there is scope for a much more detailed analysis, such as on the wear patterns on the drills, whether or not they rotated in alternate directions, and how far they penetrated. Chapter 9 reviews the results of faunal analyses, drawing on identifications of specific classes of fauna which have appeared in several theses and on new studies reported in the appendices to this volume: Michael Taylor's analysis of the dolphin and other cetacean bone, and Rick McGovern-Wilson's report on the small bird bone. Taylor's study paints a vivid picture of systematic dolphin slaughter by people who had plans for nearly every component of the corpse. But as a cook, I find it hard to agree with McGovern-Wilson (p. 150) that the degree of charring on bird bones throws light on the cooking techniques. Temperatures high enough to burn bone carbonise the flesh first—hardly the intention of the cook!

The concluding chapter (10) reminds us the definitive story of the Houhora settlement will never be told. Sensibly, artist Chris Gaskin concentrates on the environmental setting (informed by Rod Wallace's charcoal identifications) in his frontispiece, and on the details of the dolphin butchery in his final reconstruction of the site, leaving the architectural details of the structures rather sketchy. In comparison to the artefacts made by the occupants, the settlement lies under a fog of ignorance, and major questions remain as to its size,

appearance and length of occupation. Thanks to Louise Furey and her co-contributors, however, the material culture and extractive activities of its occupants are now better known, and various myths about them which have percolated through the archaeological literature have been dispelled. The bulk of the finds can probably be assigned to the 14th century, at a time when the area showed little disturbance to its vegetation and fauna. Though the Eastern Polynesian character of the artefacts is still evident, experimentation with new forms is underway and already showing differences from items recovered from Archaic sites further south. This important volume helps to balance the picture of early life in Aotearoa, for too long dominated by the southern evidence.

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Ian Smith, 2002. *The New Zealand Sealing Industry: History, Archaeology and Heritage Management*. Department of Conservation, Wellington. 72 pp., figs., tables, appendices. \$25.00.

Nigel Prickett, 2002. *The Archaeology of New Zealand Shore Whaling*. Department of Conservation, Wellington. 151 pp., figs., tables, appendices. \$45.00.

Sealing and whaling are two very similar and closely related industries, technologically, commercially and historically. These two volumes, the most recent in the Department of Conservation 'series' on the archaeology and heritage management of New Zealand's physical cultural resources, are therefore thematically related, unlike earlier regional studies such as Jill Hamel's volume on the archaeology of Otago (2001). The advantages of this approach are clear, though it is not without its disadvantages. Despite their similarities these two books are in many ways quite dissimilar. There are good reasons for this too. The archaeological remains of shore whaling are a great deal more numerous and more substantial than those of sealing, and much of Prickett's volume is taken up with site descriptions. Given that there are some 87 of these descriptions, plus information about unconfirmed sites, and that Prickett, along with others, has been visiting and recording shore whaling sites for at least 20 year over large parts of the New Zealand coastline, then this in itself is quite an achievement, and represents a significant resource for archaeologists and heritage conservationists. Smith, in this respect, is able to get ahead of the game. The physical remains of the sealing industry are far less numerous and substantial. In fact Smith (p. 71) lists only six locations that contain definite archaeological

evidence of sealing (his group 1 sites), though variously reliable degrees of historical and possible archaeological evidence exist for other sites. Smith is able to go on to the next stage, presenting a historic and archaeological overview of the sealing industry. This makes his volume more rounded, but Prickett's work lays a good foundation for a similar archaeologically based overview of shore whaling.

As a European industry, sealing has, as Smith puts it, historical primacy, but relatively little is known about it. Sealing captains guarded their secrets well, and left little evidence to allow their competitors or later historians to trace their steps. Smith begins by putting the industry in its historical context and examining the historical record, assessing its limitations. He then, in Chapter 4, divides the period from 1792, when sealing in New Zealand is thought to have begun, into 10 phases, charting the boom and bust cycles of exploitation on mainland New Zealand, a late 19th century revival on Macquarie Island and occasional limited open seasons up until legal sealing ceased in 1946. While mainland exploitation was aimed almost exclusively at the skins of fur seals, on Macquarie elephant seal oil was the main target. Chapter 5 then examines the technology and logistics of sealing. Two aspects of the industry remain unclear: the commercial aspects of what was a global industry, dependant entirely on trade, which are only lightly touched on in Chapter 2 and occasionally elsewhere; and the social impact of sealers and sealing on local Maori populations.

Prickett's whaling volume is, as noted, much more focussed on the physical archaeological remains. It is notable of course that the shore whaling industry is more thoroughly documented than sealing, and Prickett is better able to cover the economics of the industry, though he only does so on a local, not global, level. Both these extractive industries were firmly tied to European political and economic expansion, and a full understanding of the archaeology can only come about through relating it to the global commercial situation. It is well known that most whaling stations were owned by Sydney based businessmen, but the wider ties to British and American industry are not explored. Global economic cycles would have had a significant impact on the setting up of shore stations and exploration of new fisheries. Prickett also describes impacts on local Maori culture, though unfortunately all to generically and briefly. One feels there is wide scope for future MA theses here, in archaeology, anthropology, history and Maori studies. Again, the bulk of the volume is taken up with descriptions of the physical remains of shore whaling from its probable

beginnings in New Zealand at Te Awaiti, Cook Strait in 1827 up to the close of the modern Perano brothers station in Tory Channel in 1964.

So far, so good. The archaeology of sealing and whaling (such as it is for the former) are well described, and the history of each industry is at least touched upon. What of the second purpose of these volumes—conservation and heritage management? These sections in each book are rather short—five pages, including a map and two tables, for sealing, and four pages for whaling. Smith considers four factors to be relevant to “developing a management strategy” (p.53). The first of these is accurate definition of place—that is securely locating the many sites for which evidence is sparse. As Smith points out the historical association often rests in the name of the place, the intangible heritage is as important as the physical. The second factor is representation of variation—ensuring that all site types, regions, methods and periods are represented in any set of sites targeted for active management. Threats to heritage values is the third factor. Most sealing localities are remote, unlikely to be threatened by development, though tourism may have some impact. For the same reason the fourth factor—opportunities for interpretation—is limited.

Smiths recommendations are, therefore, of a general nature, a blueprint one hopes for more active and considered management in the future. Prickett is less general in his recommendations, concentrating on the mitigation of particular threats to specific sites. Though both kinds of sites are invariably coastal, whaling stations are often less remote than sealing sites, and so the pressures of development are greater. However, the overall management strategy for whaling sites is a little thin. Neither author adequately deals with the need for wider community consultation, especially as the descendants of sealers and whalers who settled and raised families are very often proud of, and knowledgeable about, their heritage. Perhaps this is a disadvantage of the thematic rather than regional approach—the continuity of community is lost.

The authors of these two volumes are neither historians nor heritage managers, but academic archaeologists. It is not surprising that the archaeology of sealing and whaling are the strong points here. Both books are an excellent resource on some of the earliest archaeology of Europeans in New Zealand. While one can always say that there is more work to do it is still imperative that concrete management strategies are devised *and* put in place to protect this vital part of

our heritage. Smith's and Prickett's work represent admirable first steps in this process.

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Dincauze, Dena F., 2000. *Environmental Archaeology: Principles and Practice*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge. 587 pp. Paper \$A85.

This book would make a useful second year university introduction to archaeological environmental science or archaeological method. It has a very broad scope but succeeds in identifying key issues, reviewing the main points of methods and directing the reader to specialist literature. The book consists of 18 chapters broken into 8 sections, preceded by a useful glossary. The introductory section, which contains 4 chapters, is essentially a call for well-conducted multi-disciplinary research. It identifies the goals of palaeoenvironmental reconstruction, discusses appropriate methods and concepts with a useful discussion of sampling and "recursive ignorance" in palaeoenvironmental science, and reviews the broad mechanisms of environmental change and human responses to environmental change. At times I felt the coverage of these broad topics was rather thin but still it contained many nuggets of information and hard won advice from an archaeological perspective.

The second section deals with chronology in two chapters. The first chapter contains a useful discussion of archaeological chronometry, which is missing from most archaeological science texts. The following chapter covers virtually any dating method you can think of. Most are only briefly reviewed, with OSL getting 5 lines, however radiocarbon dating gets a useful review. The section concludes with a case study of the dating of the Thera eruption. This should serve as a cautionary tale for those who want to argue over 100 years here or there.

Section Three covers climate, reviewing driving forces and the reconstruction of climate in two chapters. Again the subject is painted with a broad brush, however the concluding case study of the European Elm decline near the Atlantic/Sub-Boreal boundary, and the difficulty of identifying human or a climatic effects in paleoclimatological research is interesting.

Sections Four (two chapters) and Five (two chapters) deal with geomorphology and sediments and soils. Missing here is any detail on sea level changes, although inter-tidal deposits are discussed. There is also little on the chemistry or

sedimentology of archaeological deposits, although anthrosols are discussed in general. The growing field of micromorphological analysis of sediments gets little mention. The case studies include the reconstruction of landforms at Laetoli and a review of the investigation of the effects of landuse practises in the Classical Mediterranean.

Section Six reviews vegetation, covering the methods and concepts of paleobotany and more generally bioarchaeology. Palynology is well reviewed and the construction and interpretation of pollen diagrams discussed, however problems of dating pollen cores are not discussed sufficiently. The case study is the paleoecology of the European Elm decline focusing here on the possible relationships between human activity and Elm disease.

Section Seven deals with fauna in three chapters including one on humans among animals. Again this section covers everything from protozoa to elephants (find out what an ichnofossil is!) and taphonomy through sampling, but you won't find out much about identifying specimens or detailed analytical methodology. As in the other sections the focus here is on the comprehensive overview and as such these chapters would make good reading for a bioarchaeology student who wanted to see the big picture. The section ends with a case study looking at the history of the determination of seasonality at Star Carr.

The concluding section deals with integration. Firstly integration of humans with the environment and the two-way interactions that go on—I found the section on the archaeology of air pollution, as revealed by Greenland ice cores, to be fascinating. More broadly Dincauze deals with the integration of the various datasets and the integration of archaeological research with that of specialist scientists. In this, as throughout the book, she emphasises the importance of respecting the theoretical bases and scientific rigour of the various disciplines which can work with archaeologists to create a robust “anthropocentric paleoecology”.

This is a useful reference book as it seems to have at least 5 lines on just about everything with up to date references to take you into more detailed sources. It is also nice to have a text written by an archaeologist rather than by a geographer or other paleoenvironmental specialist with an interest in archaeology. The result is a very well rounded general text with an archaeological rather than a specialist discipline focus.

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