



NEW ZEALAND  
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## ARCHAEOLOGY IN NEW ZEALAND



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## REVIEWS

**Jean Guilane and Jean Zammit 2005. *The Origins of War: Violence in Prehistory*. Blackwell Publishing, Malden. Paper, xii + 282 pp., figs., tables, bib., index. \$AUD69.95.**

*Janet Davidson, Ngakuta Bay, Marlborough*

Despite its title, this is not a book about prehistory in general. It is concerned with European prehistory, and particularly with violence and the origins of warfare in France. There is some discussion of Egypt and the Middle East, even of India, but the rest of the world is hardly mentioned, except for some ethnographic examples. The one archaeological example from the Pacific is Garanger's Retoka site in Vanuatu, included in a discussion of mass sacrifices.

Nonetheless, the book has much to interest any archaeologist concerned with violence and warfare, including in New Zealand and the Pacific. There is considerable discussion of how to interpret archaeological evidence and what may constitute evidence of warfare (as opposed to interpersonal violence), human sacrifice, ritual execution, and cannibalism, for example. These are issues that confront archaeologists everywhere. There is also some revealing discussion of various beliefs about the human past that have found echoes in New Zealand, such as the idea that hunters and gatherers lived at peace with each other, and violence and aggression came in with agriculture and the associated population growth.

In the preface, the authors (a prehistorian and a medical doctor specialising in palaeo-pathology) state that their primary aim is "to outline certain problems, to discuss particular pieces of archaeological evidence, and to raise questions: in short to present rather than to prove." Their book is aimed at a broad readership and "aims neither to be scholarly nor exhaustive." Presenting, rather than proving, leads to some rather involved discussion; by the end of the book the authors have convinced themselves that people haven't got better, but haven't necessarily got worse either.

The wide-ranging introduction sets the scene in Europe and the Near East, considers aggression in non-human primates, canvasses various theories about warfare, from "exchange is a tactic, war an institution" (Clastres) to "war is an exchange gone wrong" (Lévi-Strauss), and deconstructs some popular theories about invasions and cultural replacements in France, Malta

and Corsica, to show how wrong archaeologists can be in interpreting their evidence.

The first three chapters, *Violence in hunter-gatherer society*, *Agriculture: a calming or aggravating influence?* and *Humans as targets: 4,000 to 8,000 years ago*, consider aspects of the archaeological evidence from the Palaeolithic to the Neolithic in Europe. These chapters are rich in archaeological evidence and full of interesting discussion about the difficulties of interpreting it. The principal forms of evidence discussed are depictions of conflict in art—particularly cave art, although carvings of warriors feature increasingly as time goes on—and the evidence of burials—particularly evidence of fatal wounding, but also the interpretations of mass burials as war graves or multiple sacrifices, and the difficulties of establishing exact contemporaneity or determining time-span of use of tombs or graveyards with multiple burials. Bows and arrows were the weapon of choice for much of the first part of the archaeological sequence. Rock art depicts warriors with bows and arrows; arrow points found with/in skeletons provide some of the best evidence of fatal wounding. This makes one ponder again the issue of why the bow and arrow were not used in conflict in Polynesia. Important questions are raised: did conflict increase over time? Were weapons used for hunting, warfare, or both?

The last two chapters, *The warrior: an ideological construct*, and *The concept of the hero emerges*, are more speculative in some ways, as the authors seek to explain the underlying causes of the archaeological evidence they have previously examined so critically. Although there is still plenty of archaeological evidence, there is also more speculation about developments of male/female roles and symbolism and the elevation of males to superior status because of their warrior/hero role (but surely this could have applied to those Palaeolithic hunters/warriors too?). Some rather dodgy assumptions about human societies and the development of social justice seem to creep into these chapters and are not subjected to the same critical scrutiny that was applied earlier on. At first glance there is less relevance to the Pacific in these chapters, although anyone can be fascinated by the chariots and swords that now begin to feature largely. But is the sword of a European hero any different from the mere of a Maori warrior, particularly since they are both likely to be named?

For New Zealand archaeologists, who sometimes think of fortifications as the pre-eminent sign of warfare, the very small amount of space given to fortifications in this book should be instructive.

The conclusions return to some of the main issues raised in the introduction. By now the authors have become enamoured of the ideas they

expounded in chapters 4 and 5; they feel that the mentality behind conflict is of more interest than variations in the form of warfare. However, balance is needed. Theories based too closely on archaeological evidence can present at best a sketchy reconstruction of a complex reality, while theories that do not take enough account of archaeological evidence risk being irrelevant and fanciful.

There is an evolutionary theme running throughout the book, which at times seems a bit naïve. One of its punchier and more interesting points is that new technological developments are always applied first to weapons—arrow heads, copper daggers, metal-bladed axes, swords. The relevance of the past to the present is always implicit if not explicit in the book—the preface begins with reference to Serbia, Chechnya, and Kosovo. The authors raise the possibility that archaeologists working in times of peace tend to adopt a more peace-oriented approach, while interest in prehistoric warfare increases in troubled times. If this were the case, the small amount of attention paid to Maori warfare in the recent monograph celebrating 50 years of New Zealand archaeology might suggest that we in this country are living in a peaceful enclave in a troubled world.

**Joe Watkins 2000. *Indigenous Archaeology: American Indian Values and Scientific Practice*. AltaMira Press, Walnut Creek. Paper, xii + 220 pp., bib., index. \$USD23.95.**

*Sue Bulmer, Auckland*

“The archaeologist’s story is neither *the truth* nor the *only* story of the past, but merely one story, and the political aspects of it are limited to whether or not people believe its validity” (Joe Watkins, *Anthropology News*, November 2004: 12).

The two dozen or so NZAA members who attended the World Archaeological Congress (WAC) Inter-Congress for Indigenous People at Waipapa Marae at the University of Auckland in November this year cannot help to have met, or at least to have heard, for he was keynote speaker at the banquet, the author of this important book. Joe Watkins was (with Caroline Phillips and Des Kahotea) an organiser of the conference, and his “inimitable wit and tact” (as the cover blurb says) cannot have been unnoticed. The conference was a part of the international program of WAC, which began in 1986 at Southampton, and had a programme of papers by people from 18 different countries, whose professional interests ranged from archaeology to traditional arts, museums, the teaching of archaeology to the public, as well as University students from a variety of departments. Joe Watkins is a

member of the Choctaw tribe and a federal archaeologist in Oklahoma and is one of the earliest of a (now) relatively large number of American Indians to become professional archaeologists. This professionalism has made it possible for the effective control of archaeological sites and the repatriation of human remains in museums to begin to be achieved. However, he did admit that he was occasionally tempted to escape into technological studies of artefacts or European palaeolithic studies. His PhD thesis was on the attitudes of American archaeologists toward American Indians and their archaeology, a summary of which is given in Chapter 5.

“Indigenous archaeology” is a brief history of the beginning of the acquisition of political power by indigenous Americans relating to their study, protection and presentation of their own cultural sites and materials, and it is, to a considerable extent, a success story. The story begins with the “stormy” conflict between Indians and archaeologists about control of excavations but also about authority over human remains in museums and universities. It is also about respect and humanity in dealing with cultural and human remains. He describes the existing American laws protecting cultural resources and legislation aimed at bringing about the repatriation of Indian skeletons that were stored in boxes in museums and universities all around the country, and overseas as well. There have been some successes, but there are still thousands of skeletons that have not yet been returned, due to inertia, lack of accurate records, lack of funding. First it must be established where the burials are and where they came from. Then follows the task of contacting the institutions and persuading them to cooperate. Some do and some don’t. The conference at Waipapa heard of Maori people travelling to Britain to contact museums and universities in person, often with difficulty. They commented on poor acquisition records and learned that Britain has passed a law preventing museums from deacquisitioning collections or allowing their removal out of the country.

On the other hand, it appears that the federal government in America, through its land systems and laws, supports the wishes of the Indians to control their own sites and artefacts and human remains. Indian tribes have land settlements on “reservations” and have developed tribal governance on those lands. However, most tribes involved are settled on lands that are not their own ancestral lands, but instead involve sites of different other tribes. The federal government also takes responsibility for archaeological sites on all federal government lands, and provides archaeological services through its parks system. This is the opposite of the present circumstances in New Zealand, that means that most sites dealt with by public archaeologists are those that are on private land and are threatened with destruction by commer-

cial development, with only the rare possibility of purchase of the land by the government in order to guarantee their protection.

Joe Watkins then tells the stories of four specific cases, some of which readers may have heard of through their exposure in the international news. These are: the Navajo cultural resources management; the Pawnee and the Salina Burial Pit; the conflict at the East Wenatchee Clovis Site; and the “Ancient One” of Kennewick. The Navajo have one of the oldest cultural resource management tribal organisations. They, like most Indian groups, are often dealing with sites that are not all of their own, having come into the region about 1,000 years ago. They use their traditional medicine men to identify sacred sites and burial sites, and have rules for archaeologists working in their tribal area. And they now have a Navajo Nation Tribal Museum.

The Pawnee tribe in Kansas has had relatively less involvement with archaeology, but the Salina burial pit is a site that had been featured in a commercial business since the 1930s. They successfully obtained its closure without rancour or negative publicity, even though the State wished to leave it open for educational purposes. The Pawnee have also obtained repatriation of some of their burials. In contrast, at the Clovis Site, the East Wenatchee tribe and local archaeologists in Central Washington joined together successfully in 1980 to prevent an outside individual from excavating a cache of clovis points, but accompanied by bad publicity. An even more explosive situation occurred in 1996 in Washington when nearly complete skeleton was found in a river bank, leading to a protracted dispute involving professional archaeologists, the courts, Congress and the federal government. It was argued that this was possibly one of the earliest burial that had ever been found in America, and this raised a great deal of interest and excitement due to the question of the earliest settlement. It was attempted to suspend provisions of the repatriation legislation (NAGPRA) because of the alleged unusual scientific interest. The account of this is as exciting as a Hollywood blockbuster, and it appears to now rest on establishing the jurisdiction of the tribe over the land where the burial was found. If readers still think that archaeology has nothing to do with politics, have a look at this book. It’s about other places and other cultures, but the lessons, both failures and successes, can be seen here too.

Joe Watkins ends with a brief look at comparable issues in Canada, Australia, New Zealand and Sweden. I feel disappointed about his look at New Zealand, because, imperfect as our systems are, he did not learn about the Historic Places Act, or the efforts of the New Zealand Archaeological Association, which adopted the Vermillion Accord (1989) and the WAC First Code of Ethics (1990) in slightly modified form to suit New Zealand circumstances. Does anyone have a copy of the final versions?

Joe leaves us with a inspirational ending, writing “...we are in the midst of a war over the heritage of [the “New World”]. Archaeologists and American Indians are battling over the physical and spiritual control of one of America’s earliest inhabitants.” At stake is...” the opportunity to develop a more meaningful blend between Western science and non-Western beliefs concerning the philosophy of the past... archaeology needs more than ever, a spirit of humanity, a driving desire to find out about the personality of the past...”

Read this book!

**Adrian Praetzellis 2003. *Dug to Death: A Tale of Archaeological Method and Mayhem*. Altamira Press (Rowman & Littlefield Publishers), Walnut Creek, CA. Paper. xiv + 231 pp, figures, glossaries, bibliography, index. \$NZD39.95.**

*Ian Barber, Department of Anthropology, University of Otago*

Adrian Praetzellis has published yet another unusual archaeological textbook in the style of his first textbook-novel *Death by Theory*. In *Dug to Death*, Praetzellis uses the mystery novel genre again, but this time to tackle archaeological method. Readers of *Archaeology in New Zealand* may raise surprised eyebrows to learn that New Zealand archaeology, history, culture and environment are the setting for this unorthodox approach.

Praetzellis explains in his introduction that the purpose of the book is to consider the logic and ambiguities of archaeological method, rather than add yet another volume to the lengthy list of serious ‘how to’ archaeology methods manuals. He uses imaginary characters such as Missy-Jojo-the-Dog-Faced-Girl (archaeological laboratory supervisor), Tommy Torquemanda (hunky PhD candidate), Beth Butts (whiney Anglophile) and Dr Hannah Green (itinerant archaeologist/novel heroine) and a plot built around the death of a University of Invercargill archaeologist directing an excavation in Victoria on the shores of Lake Wakatipu. The late Dr Tulliver is in effect killed by archaeology (or so it would appear). He is found buried in a collapsed archaeological trench that becomes known thereafter as Tulliver’s Trench.

Praetzellis is no stranger to New Zealand. A sabbatical visit in 2002 has given him more than a passing familiarity with South Island/Otago archaeology in particular, and the peculiarities of archaeological resource management in these isles. His acknowledgement of the generous assistance of Otago archaeologist Peter Bristow (p vii) is yet another fitting memorial to Peter, and a further reminder of his loss to us all last year.

Praetzellis largely gets the New Zealand system right as a backdrop to explore the complexities and contradictions of archaeological fieldwork

through the vicissitudes of the Victoria excavation. Perhaps in light of the author's generally irreverent and occasionally slightly racy style, he is at pains to assure readers that the University and characters of his book are entirely fictional, bearing no intended resemblance to any living school or person respectively. There is no university in Invercargill that teaches Psychic Archaeology, or at least not yet. "The obnoxious Dr. Ian Nigel Tulliver" Praetzellis explains, "received his name three years before I had any idea that two archaeologists named Ian teach at Otago" (p viii; one might add that an archaeologist named Nigel was also teaching at Otago at the time). I for one am grateful for this assurance. Forget the man's personality foibles; I would be mortified if anybody thought I had any association with the gastronomic offence that is Tulliver's trademark tuna fish spaghetti.

The author readily acknowledges that his book isn't for everyone. The novel approach employs a range of the author's own clever, quirky illustrations, some of which also provide important sidebar observations. Within the narrative framework of the plot, the treatment of method is very fieldwork-focused. There are straightforward treatments of site context, structure, formation processes and stratigraphic recording (e.g., pp 111–18, 124–28, 147–51). However, Praetzellis also links practice to ideas, including ideas that challenge simplistic views of absolute archaeological objectivity (e.g., in stratigraphic recording on pp 147–51). In particular I like the interaction between Tommy and the irritable Beth over the flexible criteria of what an archaeological site actually is (accompanied by a droll illustration) on pp 35–38. I like also the discussions of resource management and the conservation ethic in archaeology (pp 44–46, 57–59, 105–06), prehistory and history (pp 72–74) and public archaeology, technical reports and popularisation (pp 83–87, 196–200). There are some provocative challenges for the discipline as well. One of my favourites is found early on:

Pardon my truism, but methods are just ways of doing things. Without reflecting on why doing these things is worthwhile, method is an intellectual dead end. It can, in fact, turn into a curious fixation for documenting objects for the sake of the process itself, a practice that occupies the territory between fetishism and performance art. (p x)

Parts of the text are especially relevant to practising archaeologists in New Zealand and elsewhere, such as the discussions of peer review, research design and conflict of interest (pp 46, 88–92, 102–06). On occasion Praetzellis's characters offer an insightful critique of New Zealand's own peculiar system, such as Tommy's comment about collections "sitting in peoples offices and garages" (p72), a reference to our inconsistent, bipolar management of archaeological sites and excavation products (i.e., records, artefacts



and collections). There is further treatment of the international problem and principles of archaeological curation on pp 72 and 154–57.

I won't spoil a potential reader's pleasure by revealing fine plot details, or ultimately who (nearly) dun it. (OK, that's a tiny clue, but you won't get it probably until you're well into the book). I will offer the opinion that this book's approach may 'work' for teaching (to say nothing of entertainment) purposes in ways that orthodox archaeology texts cannot. Certainly, you won't be using Praetzelis to explore the finer technical points of radiocarbon dating calibration curves, sampling theory, or quantification in faunal analysis. The Further Reading section directs you to texts that will accomplish those more 'serious' tasks, while it anchors the wide-ranging and otherwise unreferenced method discussions. Yet Praetzelis teases out some of the complexities behind briefly summarised archaeological methods in a narrative form that is far more freewheeling and insightful than a formally referenced discussion. There are nuances and a fundamental honesty in this book that most standard archaeology textbooks do not achieve, not least of which is the suggestion that archaeological interpretation is far more like novel writing than most archaeologists care to acknowledge. And anybody who is about to participate in an archaeological excavation for the first time will find Praetzelis a useful preparation for the joys and challenges of fieldwork. How else will the novice know to beware the tuna fish spaghetti?