



NEW ZEALAND  
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## ARCHAEOLOGY IN NEW ZEALAND



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## REVIEWS

**Ian Lilley (ed.) 2005. *Archaeology of Oceania: Australia and the Pacific Islands*. Blackwell Studies in Global Archaeology, Lynn Meskell and Rosemary A. Joyce (series eds). Blackwell, Oxford. xviii + 396 pp, figs, bib. Index. Paper. \$AU65.95.**

*Janet Davidson, Ngakuta Bay, Marlborough*

Don't be misled by the cover. Despite the fine image of a Maori pare (door lintel) from the collections of the British Museum, there is very little mention of New Zealand in this book. Nonetheless, there is much to interest New Zealand archaeologists.

Following a wide-ranging introduction by Ian Lilley, which sets the context and describes the main themes, there are three parts to the volume: Australia, The Pacific, and Politics. The Pacific section is the largest, with nine papers. It opens with a paper by Richard Walter and Peter Sheppard on archaeology in Melanesia in which, after musing on the differences between the archaeology of the geographical entities of Polynesia and Melanesia, they discuss their work in Roviana as a case study, emphasising the use of oral tradition and the ethnohistoric record as a rich guide to the recent past. Then comes a group of related papers: Tim Denham provides a lucid review of the evidence for early agriculture in the New Guinea Highlands; Matthew Leavesley discusses the complexities of Pleistocene behaviour in the Bismarck Archipelago; and Christina Pavlides describes the evidence from the early and mid-Holocene in Melanesia generally and then from the inland rain forest of West New Britain in particular. She suggests that "the main elements of social and economic organization more usually associated with later Lapita settlements were already in place by about 4,000 years ago." As for Lapita itself, Jean-Christophe Galipaud discusses the first millennium BC in Remote Oceania in a short paper in which he proposes a view "premised on a skeptical approach to the ease with which Lapita researchers often seem to 'jump' from pottery to potters and from potters to culture." The discussion of Melanesia is rounded out by a paper in the Politics section by Christophe Sand and colleagues, which I mention below. I felt that these six papers together provide a good review of this vast area and long time scale. By contrast, three papers

on topics from Polynesia and one from Micronesia reflect rather limited spot sampling of a much wider range of current work.

Eric Conte provides a thoughtful general review of ethnoarchaeology and the use of ethnographic analogy, before focusing specifically on Polynesia and on his own work on fishing. Some of what Conte writes may seem like well trodden ground to some New Zealand archaeologists, but it is interesting to read a French perspective on the subject. Ladefoged and Graves present a methodology for identifying the sequence of development of Hawaiian community territorial units, notably ahupua'a. Sidsel Millerstrom describes ritual and domestic architecture, sacred places, and images in the Marquesas. Her paper seems very much a work in progress, but nonetheless provides a useful introduction to Marquesan art and architecture. Paul Rainbird, in a stimulating and perceptive paper, challenges established notions about the social organisation of the monumental East Micronesian sites of Nan Madol and Leluh.

The Politics section begins with a tour de force by the inseparable team of Christophe Sand, Jacques Bole and André Ouetcho on "What is archaeology for in the Pacific?" In it they manage to cover the colonial history of New Caledonia, its prehistoric sequence, and the politics and contested ground about different understandings of New Caledonia's past and future – such as the contrast between archaeological understanding of the prehistoric sequence and recently developed but passionately held beliefs about the timeless and unchanging nature of the Kanak traditional past. Anita Smith then discusses Fiji's old capital of Levuka as a case study of heritage management in the Pacific – one which reflects the more widespread problem of largely unworkable legislation and processes borrowed from or imposed by colonial administrations, and the role of tourism in heritage management. This section ends with short, frank personal statements from three indigenous archaeologists: Mickaëlle-Hinanui Cauchois (French Polynesia), Mark Dugay-Grist (Australia) and Herman Mandui (Papua New Guinea).

As a reader with less interest in or knowledge of Australian than Oceanic archaeology, I was pleasantly surprised with the first section on Australia, which I read last. The first paper, by Sue O'Connor and Peter Veth on Pleistocene settlement in Northern Australia, avoids the "long versus short chronology" debate in favour of a review of what people were actually doing once they got there. In an important paper, Bruno David tackles the problem of meaning in Australian archaeology by considering specific examples where archaeological evidence can be brought to bear on place, ritual and symbolism. He shows that in these three cases, aspects of the Dreaming have emerged in the relatively recent past. This leads him to conclude that "not only is it invalid to impose Australian Aboriginal (or any other) ethnography onto

a European or other Paleolithic past...but that it is indeed invalid to impose it onto Australia's own distant past, be it Pleistocene or even middle Holocene." In a completely different but also impressive paper, Peter Hiscock provides a penetrating description of technological changes in Holocene Australia as responses to changing provisioning costs and risks. The last two papers concern rock art. Jo McDonald and Peter Veth consider how style is used in a range of environments to signal between and intra-group cohesion, comparing rock art in arid desert and fertile coastal study areas. Anne Clarke and Ursula Frederick discuss paintings of Macassan praus and European ships as records of cross-cultural encounters in the art of Groote Eylandt in the Gulf of Carpentaria.

*Archaeology of Oceania* is the eighth in this Blackwell "series of contemporary texts, each carefully designed to meet the needs of archaeology instructors and students seeking volumes that treat key regional and thematic areas of archaeological study." The series editors claim that each volume contains newly commissioned articles by top scholars. It might be more correct to say of this volume that it contains papers by emergent to mid-career scholars, but it is none the worse for that. And it is good to see French colleagues well represented among the authors.

The volume makes no pretense of providing a comprehensive coverage of what is now a vast field. Instead it focuses on interesting and important recent work. There are intriguing connections and echoes between papers in different parts of the book (and helpful cross references have been inserted in appropriate places). Pleistocene settlement and issues of cost and risk management are, not surprisingly, common to Australia and Near Oceania. Questions of ethnographic analogy and the richness and possible shortness of 'traditional' ways crop up in Australia, Melanesia and Polynesia. In short, there is a great deal to interest, and some of the papers are very good indeed.

It is a pity that New Zealand is not represented and I have pondered why. Are we doing nothing new and interesting at all? Did one or more planned New Zealand contributions fail to materialise? Is Blackwell planning a whole volume on New Zealand, or has it been pre-empted by *Change Through Time*? Certainly there are some papers in the latter that could have found an honourable place in the Lilley volume.