

JOURNAL REVIEW

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Volume 2, 2006, of *The Journal of Samoan Studies*, published by the Centre for Samoan Studies, National University of Samoa is devoted entirely to the theme of archaeology in Samoa. More specifically it contains the results of recent researches into Samoa's past, as reflected in the material and other evidence left in the soils of the Samoan islands throughout their over 3,000 years of human settlement. This archaeological evidence in turn becomes a means of interpreting and analysing material culture, institutions and social organisation of Samoa. The journal therefore is a repository of new knowledge about Samoa's past.

But it is more than this. Because these researches are not just about a single island but encompasses all the major islands of the Samoan archipelago, stretching from Manu'a in the east to Savai'i in the west. Thus, Alex Morrison, University of Hawaii, did his research on using the Geographical Information System (GIS) to predict archaeological sites on the Manu'a islands. Such a model was intended to facilitate the work of determining the best such sites for investigation.

For the biggest island, Savai'i, Tomo Ishimura of the National Research Institute for Cultural Properties, Japan, and Tomohiro Inoue of Kyoto University, carried out archaeological excavations at a midden site at Si'utu. The research was intended to discover the kinds of food ancient Samoans ate and the tools they used. Along the process they also discovered something new about the changing sea levels in Samoa's past.

Helene Martinsson-Wallin, Paul Wallin, both of the University of Gotland, and Geoffrey Clark of the Australian National University, wrote about their excavations at the Pulemelei site, Palauli, the largest stone monument in Polynesia, and the sources of many historical artefacts including pottery, suggesting an ancient history.

Most of the studies, however, were about Tutuila, American Samoa. Thus Suzanne Eckert of Texas A & M University studied the ancestral Polynesian plain ware production (for pottery) and technological style at the village of Aganoa, Tutuila. Basically she found that there were two major styles of tempering ancient pottery in the village: one using crushed pieces of pots, the other using remains of volcanic rocks. This in turn suggests that two separate groups were responsible for these styles. Questions arise therefore, what were these groups, how did they function in the social organisation and what part did they play in any trading networks?

Suzanne Eckert and Frederic Pearl of Texas A & M Galveston also feature in another research on the analysis of Polynesian plain ware from the Ulu Tree site, Tutuila. Plain ware refers to an undecorated style of pottery which Samoan ancestors used to manufacture from 500 BC to about 500 AD. Ulu Tree is a site on the Tafuna Plains, near the international airport of American Samoa. A total of 259 ceramic sherds were examined from this site. The objectives of the research were: 1) to characterise local sherds to enable them to be compared with sherds from other Western Polynesian sites; 2) to find any changes in ceramic attributes which could reflect corresponding changes in Samoan social history. Due to the small sample, the researchers had only limited success.

The final study on Tutuila was carried out by Quent Winterhoff and David Rigtrup of the University of Oregon. They investigated prehistoric basalt adze production at two quarries at Malaeloa and Leone (there are at least nine other such quarries). According to the authors, these different production sites contain significant variations recorded in acquisition techniques, periods of occupation and scales of production. These dissimilarities often reflect changes in exchange and larger economic processes (2006:88).

An interesting contribution is provided by Christophe Sand of the University of New Caledonia, who recounts the ancient links that exist between Samoa on the one hand, and `Uvea and Futuna on the other. What Sand proposes is that these relations were familiar and intimate before the colonial times but that after colonisation by the French, there was a deliberate effort to discourage the memory of such links because of the new focus on creating a French identity. All part of our Samoan history.

In the final article, David J. Addison and Tautala S. Asaua summarise some of the main findings of the archaeological researches in Samoa. In the main, traditional versions and dates of settlement of the Samoan islands by the Lapita settlers from Vanuatu and Fiji are sustained but additional questions arise. For instance, was pottery continued to be made in Samoa right up to 1600 AD as some researchers have maintained, or did it end rather suddenly in 400 AD in Tutuila and `Upolu and 500 AD in Manu'a? This and many more, such as the sea levels of ancient times have risen as a result of the new researches.

As most of the authors themselves have vouched their findings are best considered as preliminary, there is still plenty of room for more archaeological researches in the islands of Samoa. Now that the National University of Samoa has an archaeology programme operated by the Centre for Samoan Studies, the future for further archaeological researches in Samoa looks very bright indeed.

Finally, all the articles are highly technical in nature because they employ technical terms and professional methodologies. Much of the language is therefore new to the ordinary reader, who therefore will find it helpful to read with the help of a dictionary.