

Samoan Archaeology 2006

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This issue of the Journal of Samoan Studies brings together selected papers from two recent sessions on Samoan archaeology: at the Oceanic Explorations Conference held in Tonga in August 2005; and at the 18th Congress of the Indo-Pacific Prehistory Association held in March 2006 in Manila. The authors address a richly diverse set of archaeological topics ranging from community outreach and the use of oral history to more traditional site reports and technical analyses. Geographically the papers are equally diverse, covering all of Samoa from Manu'a to Savai'i.

Sand's paper exemplifies the advantages of utilizing oral traditions in archaeology. In addition to incorporating archaeological and linguistic evidence, the long-standing yet often neglected relationship of Samoa with 'Uvea and Futuna is a dominant focus in this paper. The impacts of colonialism during prehistoric and historic times is well documented in oral traditions and is dissected by Sand to reveal the depth of the relationship between Samoa, 'Uvea and Futuna. An exciting aspect of this paper is its demonstration that archaeological and traditional knowledge need not be in conflict, but can complement each other. The archaeological evidence from 'Uvea and Futuna also shows similarities to Samoa, and in turn will hopefully encourage more work in furthering our understanding of all three island groups prehistoric relationship, in relation to the wider Fiji-West Polynesia region.

Morrison's paper indicates the value of Geographic Information Systems (GIS) for predictive modelling of possible archaeological site locations. His Manu'a example highlights the utility of this technology for historic preservation site management. As the pace of development quickens on 'Upolu and Savai'i - where land areas are relatively large and government resources fully utilized elsewhere - this tool could be especially useful in managing the country's archaeological sites.

Ishimura and Inoue's paper is the first appearance in an English publication of the results of their excavations on Savai'i. This first excavation of a coastal site on Samoa's largest island suggests the complexities involved in interpreting coastal geomorphological processes in Samoa and is another indication of just how localized scenarios might be. Their faunal assemblage is not only the first reported from Savai'i, but dates to a period whose marine exploitation strategies little is known.

Although archaeology focuses on the past, important issues raised and discussed by Matinsson-Wallin, Clark and Wallin remind us as archaeologists of our responsibility to indigenous Pacific peoples. The effects of their Pulemelei project have begun to create an awareness of not only archaeology in Samoa but also the need to develop programmes that will benefit Samoan people. In their paper they describe the development of initiatives within relevant government, non-government and educational institutions.

Domestic production is well studied in Polynesia for a variety of products. Eckert's paper on ceramics at Aganoa brings this area of research to ceramic production in Samoa. Eckert's identification of two production groups at Aganoa is a first for Tutuila and bodes well for her continued efforts at a contextualized understanding of Samoan ceramic production. Her identification of shaped sherds (triangles and a disc) is also a first for Tutuila and may suggest continuity with the Mulifanua assemblage, where shaped-herd discs abound. Although grog temper has been previously noted in Samoa, Eckert's identification of its use in -50 per cent of the Aganoa sherds is the first indication of how important this temper may have been (at least locally). Tempers from other parts of Samoa have been characterised (for example, Dickinson 2006; Dickinson and Shutler Jr 1979, 2000; Dickinson et al 1996; Petchy 1995), with Tutuila previously unknown. Eckert's paper in this volume, and her plans to study tempers from other sites on Tutuila should generate much needed data sets comparable to those available for 'Ofu and 'Upolu.

The paper of Eckert and Pearl analysing the ceramics from Site AS-31-127 complements Cochrane's (2004) description of assemblages from other sites on the Tafuna Plain. The growing number of ceramic sites identified on this late Holocene landform suggests this area will be important in understanding the prehistory of ceramics on Tutuila. The high degree of diversity in both rim form and temper noted by Eckert and Pearl at Site AS-31-127 also suggests the interpretive potential of

sites in this area.

The durability of stone tools in the archaeological record provides archaeologists with material to address multiple questions surrounding resource access and distribution as well as the more traditional topic of manufacturing techniques. Winterhoff and Rigtrup's paper discusses possible reduction strategies in order to understand the differences in adze production from two areas on Tutuila. Their preliminary study also revisits the Tataga Matau data, providing a background for understanding other possible quarry sites throughout Tutuila.

Each paper in this issue highlights significant questions for future archaeological work in Samoa. The initiation of Samoan archaeology in the 1950s through Jack Golson's preliminary study, followed in the 1960s by the foundational research of Roger Green, Janet Davidson and colleagues, provided the basis for archaeologists' understanding of Samoan prehistory. Subsequent investigations by Jennings, Holmer and colleagues in the 1970s provided additional information for 'Upolu and Savai'i'. Work by J. Clark and colleagues in the 1980s and 1990s (as well as that of Leach, Witter, and Best at the Tataga Matau quarry) helped define the prehistory of Tutuila. Kirch, Hunt and colleagues' work on 'Ofu in the 1980s gave a view of the prehistory of Manu'a. These decades saw the initial ideas on Samoan prehistory expanded, filled important geographic and technical gaps, and raised many additional questions.

Since the 1970s, there has been virtually no archaeological research on 'Upolu and Savai'i'. In American Samoa, the archaeology of the last decade has been dominated by development-driven historic-preservation projects of varying quality, most of which has remained documented only in the "gray literature".

It is encouraging to see a renewed interest in Samoan archaeology, especially work on the long-neglected islands of 'Upolu and Savai'i'. This interest is broad, international, and not confined to a single institution. We note that authors in this issue are from Sweden, New Zealand, Australia, Hawaii, Oregon, Tutuila, Texas, Japan, and New Caledonia. The future looks bright for Samoan archaeology. Not only are there established professionals conducting investigations here, but especially encouraging is the number of graduate students engaged in Samoan topics and with long-term commitments to research in Samoa. We look forward to them completing their academic courses and establishing their own programmes of research in Samoan archaeology and continuing to address the wide variety of topics they are currently interested in.

Such themes are addressed in this special issue of the Journal of Samoan Studies. We believe that the papers herein are an indication of instigating more specialized research in Samoa, particularly in areas still lacking archaeological research such as Savai'i and the small offshore islands throughout the Samoan archipelago.

Finally, we would like to thank the Director of the Centre for Samoan Studies and the editor of this journal, Professor Le'apai Lau Asofou So'o, for inviting us to be guest editors of this special issue. Also special thanks to Telesia Lafotanoa and her production team for their time and patience in making this special issue happen. Although the authors could have chosen to publish their papers elsewhere, we join them in acknowledging how appropriate it is to have papers on Samoan archaeology published in this forum. We believe that it is important as archaeologists to practice reciprocity, a strong component not only of Samoan culture, but a widely held ethic in Oceania. Because this journal is more accessible to both the general Samoan audience and Samoan academics, we hope it will raise awareness about archaeology in Samoa and encourage more Samoans to participate in the discipline.

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