

study is caught in that tension between wanting a fully-fleshed human understanding of the landscape and the physicality of having still to map things for management purposes. As a tool for archaeologists, phenomenology seeks to show that people have a 'wider, lived and working' (p. 139) understanding of places in the landscape; that landscape only exists in the relationship between 'space' and 'place' (p. 2). In a sense, we all know this from our own experience, so as a concept it really only seems revelatory when applied to past groups of people, who for so long have been represented through the filter of bounded sites and collections of artefacts. This is the real symbolism of archaeology – that the 'site' still stands for the 'people' and always will as long as cultural heritage management is a necessary part of archaeology.

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HEATHER BURKE
Flinders University

The Sea People: Late Holocene Maritime Specialisation in the Whitsunday Islands, Central Queensland.

By Bryce Barker

Terra Australis 20. Pandanus Books, Canberra, 2004.

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Pp.xx+166. AUD \$49.95 + postage.

Terra Australis 20 publishes Barker's 1995 doctoral thesis of a similar title. It is an important contribution to the growing corpus of regional studies conducted over the last two decades which provide near-complete coverage of the Queensland coast from Townsville south. The cover teases the reader with azure waters bounding deserted tropical islands and promises the 'details of the two oldest sites of Aboriginal occupation on the tropical east coast of Australia, as well as formulating a model of late Holocene change for the wider region'.

The Sea People essentially consists of three parts: introductory chapters which review models of coastal use; the Whitsunday Islands case study covering ethnohistory, palaeoenvironments, methods and the excavations themselves; and final chapters synthesising results and presenting a model for Holocene culture change in the region.

Excavation reports are presented for four sites excavated between 1988 and 1992: Nara Inlet 1 and Nara Inlet Art Site on Hook Island; Border Island 1 on Border Island; and Hill Inlet Rock Shelter 1 on Whitsunday Island. The South Molle Island Quarry is also described and preliminary results of petrographic analyses presented.

The 9,000 year plus sequence from Nara Inlet 1 forms the core of the monograph. After the Pleistocene-aged Wallen Wallen Creek in Moreton Bay, Barker's Nara Inlet 1 and Border Island 1 are the earliest dated sites on the Queensland coast and amongst only a handful of sites in the Australian region which have evidence of coastal occupation over the final stages of the Holocene marine transgression. Nara Inlet 1, in particular, is remarkable for its

extraordinarily well-preserved sequence which includes knotted grass string as well as wooden and shell artefacts.

Barker demonstrates that the region was occupied before 9,000 years ago. He argues that earliest occupation coincides with the arrival of the sea and that there is no change in the early to mid-Holocene sequence associated with continuing sea-level rise. In contrast, dramatic changes are evident in the four sites post-dating 3,000 BP, including increases in discard rates, the occupation of new sites, a broadening of the resource base, the appearance of specialised marine technology (e.g. harpoons, fish hooks) and the introduction of toxic plants in the last 500 years. Barker argues that the origin of the 'Whitsunday system' of permanent island-based maritime hunter-gatherers recorded ethnohistorically can be traced to these changes dating to around 3,000 BP, with further changes along this trajectory occurring in the last 500 years. Barker analyses recent lifeways in the Whitsundays to those documented in the Princess Charlotte Bay area, helping the reader to visualise the intensive sea-orientation of people in the area that Barker sees as emerging in the very recent past.

Barker accounts for these changes in terms of 'demographic restructuring' involving 'a regional and local reorganisation of populations over the landscape' (p.148). The changes are correlated with a general move from largely 'open' social structures to more 'closed' systems reflecting increased boundedness of social groups and increased regulation of territories and resources. The restricted distribution of raw materials from the South Molle Island Quarry and the apparent linguistic and social insularity of Aboriginal groups at the time of European invasion are drawn on to support the argument. Similar models have been proposed by Bruno David for southeast Cape York Peninsula and Ian McNiven for southeast Queensland.

A major contribution of the work is in demonstrating the presence of a wide range of marine and estuarine taxa throughout the last phases of marine transgression, effectively dismissing models relying on lags in coastal productivity which had some currency in the 1980s. A continuing problem, however, is our lack of knowledge of the productivity of these environments and how comparable they are to those of today.

The excellent preservation of materials also allowed Barker to define an apparently widespread decrease in stone artefact discard in the late Holocene which was offset by increased representation of artefacts manufactured from organic materials. This is a salutary lesson for archaeologists interpreting stone artefact discard patterns in sites with poorer preservation conditions.

Given the importance of Nara Inlet 1 and Border Island 1 to coastal archaeology in Australia, I was disappointed not to find more detailed information presented for these assemblages. Data from these two sites are only presented as cm/g/MNI/# per 1,000 years within broad phases defined by the few available radiocarbon dates. Raw numbers are only given by square, except for fish, terrestrial fauna and edible plants at Nara Inlet 1 and fish at Border Island 1 where MNI/XU are noted. At Nara Inlet 1 these data are combined for all squares and the reader is left to assume that XUs are equivalent across all the three squares presented for the site. Note that some raw data for Nara Inlet 1 appears elsewhere (see Barker 1999), although Barker notes that *The Sea People* contains the most accurate records (p. xviii). While this method of data presentation is useful for visualising overall trend it prevents other researchers from accessing the data. For reasons which are not explained, more detailed information is presented for the recent deposits at Nara Inlet Art Site and Hill Inlet Rock Shelter 1. There are no appendices.

Another limitation of the study is the small sample size. A total of 5.25m² was excavated in four rockshelters, 1.75m² were

analysed, and the results from 1.5m² are presented in *The Sea People*. As Barker notes, continuing work on this material and on the adjacent mainland is critical for further elucidating the preliminary results presented in the work and for defining interaction patterns in the broader region. The monograph certainly reveals the rich potential of this region, with Barker noting numerous deeply stratified rockshelter sites on Hook Island and a range of other site types that might usefully be investigated in the future. Although the author notes in the preface that 'no attempt has been made to update the text much beyond the date of its submission' (p. xviii), I encourage readers to read *The Sea People* in conjunction with Barker's and Lamb's more recent publications which advance the interpretations presented here (e.g. Barker 1998, 1999; Genever *et al.* 2003; Lamb 1996; Lamb and Barker 2001).

The front page of *The Sea People* promises additional information relating to this book from the Pandanus Books website. Unfortunately, at the time of writing, some time after release of the book, I was still unable to find anything on the website. Perhaps this would be an excellent place to host detailed site data from volumes in the Terra Australis series such as this one.

After a long hiatus in publication throughout the 1990s, the revitalised Terra Australis series provides a welcome and important (and attractive!) local venue for the publication of data-rich studies that might otherwise not see the light of day.

The Sea People makes a major contribution not only to our knowledge of Aboriginal lifeways in the Whitsunday region, but to our broader understandings of the interaction of people and environment in Holocene Australia. *The Sea People* is also a milestone in the continuing work of Barker, Lamb and colleagues in the region. I look forward to the next instalment!

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SEAN ULM
University of Queensland

Kohika. The archaeology of a late Maori lake village in the Ngati Awa rohe, Bay of Plenty, New Zealand.

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Wetland archaeology has had a long and moderately distinguished history in Europe, Asia and America, with many failures as well as triumphs in the past 150 years. The real successes have been few, and any continuum of disciplined approaches is hard to identify. In Japan, for example, a number of spectacular sites remain as isolates, with little determined environmental work based firmly on strong theoretical principles; in western North America, the story is equally irregular, a few successes and more lost opportunities. The Pacific Rim and the entire complexity of landscapes in this part of the world offer remarkably varied and potentially highly rewarding environments in which to practice the craft of wetland archaeology, and here in the book *Kohika* we have a fine example of that craft.

The evidence of human activities that comes from wetlands and wet sites is reasonably well-known to some archaeologists, and resolutely ignored by many. Almost all of the historical and ethnographic evidence that is available points to the heavy use of organic materials in almost every settlement, industry and social activity in almost every documented region of the world. For Polynesia, a recent estimate is in the 20/80 scale, that is, 20% of material objects were and are of durable inorganic character, 80% of organic perishable origin, and only under particular conditions will that high % be potentially represented, and almost always only a part of that %. This reflects what we generally call 'artefacts', and the same may well be said of more permanent elements of material culture, including structures. Many a study has demonstrated the problems, with variable preservation of wood, other plant fibres, bone, skin and hair, seeds, and other wider diagnostic environmental and economic evidence from an equally divergent range of occupations. Landscapes often receive cursory treatment in wet site reports, in part due to an inability to cope with the potential for detailed analyses, and only in part because of the excitement of site finds that can overwhelm the minds of the discoverers. At *Kohika* we have a fair and balanced view of it all, with perhaps less mention of the gaps than we might expect, but here speaks someone who has spent far too many years paddling about himself in the boglands of western Europe, and who now thinks back on what he probably neglected on his own sites of the 1960s and 1970s.

Kohika was a palisaded village set on a tiny island in a swamp, with open lake waters near at hand. The occupation of the site was short, perhaps only two generations of people, and the thriving community of the late 17th century AD was terminated by floodwaters, the site mostly thereby sealed by wet sediments and thus preserved. The discovery of the site in 1974 led to explorations by the local Historical Society and shortly thereafter Geoff Irwin was commissioned to undertake a major investigation of the site. Excavations in 1975-78 and fieldwork in 1979-81 led to the recovery of quantities of just the sorts of evidence that others in Europe, Japan and the eastern USA were also retrieving from a variety of wet contexts. By the mid-1980s some attempt was being made to link all these activities through a network called WARP (the Wetland Archaeology Research Project), and Geoff Irwin was at once drawn into the fold; exchanges of information about discoveries, techniques, publications and the like became possible