

notes a political unwillingness to invest in the heritage process. It is the same in Australia, but what action are individual practitioners taking to ensure a relevant deal for heritage?

While this book may be a benchmark for New Zealand in 2004, it is out of date for Australian readers, although many of the issues are relevant as a wake up call. Policy is in a vacuum and it is up to professional bodies to raise and debate these issues before any comment is regarded by bureaucrats downsizing and simplifying processes as irrelevant.

**PLACE AS OCCUPATIONAL HISTORIES:
AN INVESTIGATION OF THE DEFLATED
SURFACE ARCHAEOLOGICAL RECORD
OF PINE POINT AND LANGWELL
STATIONS, WESTERN NEW SOUTH WALES,
AUSTRALIA**

Justin Shiner

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The main goal of this monograph, which is a slightly modified version of Shiner's PhD thesis, is to highlight the relevance of surface deposits of stone artefacts for the investigation of place use histories. Shiner's work was part of the Western New South Wales Archaeology Project (WNSWAP), directed (and much published on) by Simon Holdaway and Patricia Fanning. As documented in this monograph, Shiner's project was a study of the composition and chronology of stone artefact assemblages from four locations in arid western New South Wales. The project is motivated by a critique of the assumption that surface sites in arid zones were created at similar times and represent similar periods of time, analogous to ethnographic observations of site use.

Particularly notable about this study is its exploration of two issues relating to surface sites as a resource about past human behaviour. First, Shiner's consideration of geomorphologic history shows that environmental variability can limit attempts to build synchronic settlement models. In particular, changing alluvial contexts in western New South Wales mean that present landscapes are poor analogues for prehistoric landscapes and the ages of the sites are constrained by the ages of the land surfaces. Second, Shiner's chronological framework, derived from 16 radiocarbon-dated hearths, is crucial evidence to support his claims that surface sites are deflated, palimpsest and irregularly occupied deposits. Along with other work done by the WNSWAP, this shows that dating surface scatters of open sites is viable (provided they have hearths) and adds substantial value to open sites as an archaeological resource (provided the hearths can be clearly associated with the lithics).

As a side note on the dating, the Bayesian method for identifying clusters of dates is not described in adequate detail to enable reproduction (other statistics used in the volume are common frequentist methods). This is problematic given that the model ranking method used in the monograph comes from software that is currently unavailable (DateLab

and the method is not available in other packages. A better approach might have been to use a method that has been more extensively published on and is implemented in widely available calibration software (e.g. Ward and Wilson's clustering in CALIB). Aside from that, the detail evident in Shiner's treatment of geomorphology and chronology sets a high standard for future work on prehistoric surface sites, especially by consultant archaeologists interested in making more reliable scientific assessments of open sites.

The stone artefact technologies at the four locations are described in detail in three chapters. The assemblages are partitioned by raw materials and a suite of technological and metric attributes are examined to compare relative intensity of reduction between the raw materials. These are robust analyses because of the use of multiple independent lines of evidence. The analyses may have benefited from further partitioning; for example, of the binary classes used by Shiner (cortical and non-cortical cores) into finer-grained scales (e.g. cores with cortex coverage recorded to the nearest 10% plus counts of flake scars per core). More explicit links between the variables considered in the monograph and experimental studies of the characteristics of these variables would have strengthened the interpretations of the lithic analysis. Shiner's main conclusion from the lithic analysis is that although the availability of raw materials has some influence on reduction patterns, there are inconsistencies in the measures of assemblage reduction intensity and clear patterns between the assemblages are hard to identify.

Shiner concludes that ethnographically-derived concepts of occupation intensity, duration of occupation and mobility are not supported by his analysis, especially the inconsistent results of the different attributes related to core reduction analysis and the limited explanatory success of distance-decay models for these sites. These are argued to result from a mixture of site uses and technological strategies at each location. The hiatuses implied by the radiocarbon date distribution from the open sites also suggest to Shiner that there have been discontinuities in site use and technological behaviours, contributing to the complexity of the assemblages. These are persuasive arguments and should stimulate similar future work attempting to investigate the temporal contexts of surface assemblages.

Peter Veth's investigations in the arid Rudall River region of Western Australia are presented throughout the monograph as typical of the ethnographically-derived settlement-subsistence models that Shiner has criticised as no longer tenable. On one hand, this reflects the strong influence that Veth's work has had on Australian arid zone archaeology, especially amongst consulting archaeologists. On the other hand, it often reads like a replay of the mid-1990s controversy between Veth and Holdaway (one of Shiner's PhD supervisors). A more progressive and productive approach might have been to forge an alternative model in detail – such as one based on Richard Cosgrove's behavioural ecological model that is approvingly mentioned (p.20), and investigate predictions derived from this new model.

To conclude, this monograph is a valuable demonstration of the dynamism of the behaviours that contribute to the formation of open sites. It will be of great interest to those taking the next step of decoding some of the complexity documented here by Shiner and building new models to better understand the behaviours involved in arid zone open site formation.

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