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Roger Curtis Green (1932–2009)

Peter Sheppard and Louise Furey

Roger Green arrived in New Zealand in 1961 as a lecturer in archaeology at the University of Auckland, filling the position left vacant by Jack Golson's departure to The Australian National University in Canberra, Australia (see also Furey, **Chapter 31**, and Litster et al, **Chapter 32**, both this volume). Green returned to Hawai'i in 1967 but made New Zealand his permanent home from 1973 when he was given a personal chair at the University of Auckland. Green retired in 1992 as emeritus professor but energetically continued research into Pacific settlement until his death. He is widely acknowledged as an enormously influential archaeologist in Pacific archaeology with a prodigious output of research papers (Davidson et al. 1996).

Green obtained degrees at the University of New Mexico and Harvard University before being awarded a Fulbright Fellowship in 1958, during which he was introduced to Polynesian archaeology. He first visited Hawai'i before spending nine months in Auckland with the intention of gaining experience prior to commencing fieldwork in the Opunohu Valley, Mo'orea, French Polynesia, under the supervision of Douglas Oliver, anthropologist at Harvard University. While in New Zealand, Green familiarised himself with New Zealand archaeology, conducting several excavations including at Tairua on the Coromandel Peninsula (Smart and Green 1962). Auckland University anthropology department colleagues were Bruce Biggs, linguist, who later became head of Māori

Studies, and Ralph Bulmer, anthropologist (see also Summerhayes, **Chapter 34**, this volume). Biggs introduced Green to historical linguistics (Pawley 2010), which over many years was widely incorporated into his research on settlement of the Pacific. Green also collaborated with Jack Golson to write the first handbook for site recording in New Zealand (Golson and Green 1959), which informed his later work on developing a recording scheme for the Solomon Islands (Green 1972).

Green's first foray into tropical Polynesia was to Mangareva in the late 1950s, sponsored by the American Museum of Natural History. The unpublished report of his excavation, initially intended to be his PhD dissertation at Harvard, was revised and finally published many years later. A survey of the Opunohu Valley on Mo'orea followed, accompanied by extensive excavations. Green's work was influenced by new theoretical approaches to settlement patterns developed by Gordon Willey, but also incorporated ethnohistory as a direct result of his tutelage by Douglas Oliver (Davidson 1996:11).

Green was appointed lecturer at the University of Auckland in 1961 and was the sole archaeologist there for several years, before the appointment of further archaeologists. In the period between 1961 and 1967, when he left Auckland for the Bishop Museum in Hawai'i, he carried out further excavations in New Zealand, including additional work at Tairua, where in 1964 a pearl shell trolling lure shank was recovered from the fourteenth-century site containing extinct birds including moa (Green 1967). This remarkable find was the first, and only, archaeologically excavated object with a direct connection to tropical East Polynesia where Māori ancestors originated (Figure 33.1). In the early 1960s the dorso-ventral rectangular-sectioned form was thought to be unique to New Zealand and a local innovation, but an example was subsequently found at Hane in the Marquesas by Sinoto in 1965 (Green 1967:86).



Figure 33.1. Pearl shell lure, Tairua, New Zealand.

Source: Collection Auckland Museum Tāmaki Paenga Hira.

Green's background in geology led him to understand very early the potential for studying exchange and interaction using the sourcing of lithic materials, an interest that he would maintain throughout his career. His work on the sources of New Zealand obsidian and characterisation of archaeological obsidian began in 1962 (Green 1962), making him a global leader in this type of analysis, which was just starting to be employed in North America and the Near East (Cann and Renfrew 1964).

Green's main interest was in settlement patterns in the wider Polynesian area. With Janet Davidson of Auckland Museum, he coordinated an extensive program of excavations in Western Samoa (Figure 33.2) over seven months in 1963–64, later editing a two-volume publication of the results (Green and Davidson 1969, 1974). The project was funded by the National Science Foundation through the Bishop Museum and was one of several projects exploring the archaeology of Polynesia (Green 1964). Many archaeology students were involved and given opportunities that enhanced their own research profiles. Some of the same individuals went on to work with Green on other later projects.



Figure 33.2. Roger Green at Falevao, Upolu, Western Samoa, 1967.

Source: Anthropology Photo Archive, University of Auckland.

Green returned to Auckland from Hawai'i in 1970 as a James Cook research fellow affiliated to Auckland Museum. It was during this time that he organised the first stage of the Southeast Solomons Research Project, co-directed by Doug Yen, ethnobotanist then based in Hawai'i. The project was a large multidisciplinary one, involving researchers in linguistics, anthropology, material culture, ethnobotany, historical research and archaeology, and was unique at that time. His experience in setting up the Samoan project, and the contract-based work in Hawai'i such as in the Makāha Valley on O'ahu, gave Green the credentials to take on the more ambitious Solomons project.

The primary goal of this project was to investigate and develop a prehistory for both sides of what Green would come to call the division between Near and Remote Oceania. This boundary was created by a 400 km water gap between the eastern end of the main Solomon Islands (Ulawa, Makira, Santa Ana) and the Reef/Santa Cruz Islands, which are the first landfall to the east in Remote Oceania. Crossing this gap was hypothesised to represent the first colonisation of Remote Oceania and the Western Pacific. Earlier finds of very distinctive Lapita pottery in the Bismarck Archipelago (see Howes, **Chapter 15**, and Spriggs, **Chapter 24**, both this volume), and in New Caledonia, Fiji (see Spriggs, **Chapter 27**, this volume) and Tonga, allowed Jack Golson (1959) to postulate that there had once been a continuous culture straddling Island Melanesia and Western Polynesia, ancestral to all the peoples of Remote Oceania including Polynesians. In the early 1970s knowledge of the Lapita sites and the chronology of movement into the Pacific was still limited, and Roger Green was determined to fill that gap.

Green and Yen – along with students and colleagues, many of whom have gone on to become eminent archaeologists – set out in the first stage (1970–72) of the Southeast Solomons Culture History Project to systematically study islands either side of the Near/Remote Oceania divide through 15 field projects (Green and Cresswell 1976). In the Eastern Solomons, Graeme Ward and Gilbert Hendren studied Ulawa, Pamela Swadling and Roger Green Santa Ana, and Roger Green and Michael Kaschko eastern Makira (San Cristobal). In each of these areas they created the foundation culture history, including the documentation of the late sixteenth-century Spanish occupation at Pamua, Makira, related to the ill-fated expeditions of Alvaro de Mendaña de Neyra, the first Europeans to sight what they called the Solomon Islands. But despite considerable fieldwork throughout these islands only a few very poor

quality plain pottery sherds, quite unlike the elaborate Lapita pottery, were recovered from excavations on Santa Ana, following initial finds some years earlier by the anthropologist William Davenport (see Katz and Boileau, **Chapter 35**, this volume). The expectations of a continuous distribution of Lapita ceramics from the Bismarcks to Remote Oceania through the eastern Solomons were not met.



Figure 33.3. Nenumbo (Site SE-RF-2), Te Motu Taiba, Reef Islands, Solomon Islands, 1971.

Source: Anthropology Photo Archive, University of Auckland.

The picture on the eastern side of the divide was remarkably different. In almost every sheltered bay and lagoon studied in the islands of the Temotu Province of the Solomons, Lapita ceramics were quickly found. As in the Eastern Solomons considerable work was devoted to development of cultural sequences, including that of Douglas Yen on Santa Cruz (Nendö) and Patrick Kirch and Paul Rosendahl in Anuta,

with Jim Allen studying the Mendaña settlement in Graciosa Bay on Santa Cruz. Green focused on excavation of large Lapita sites in the Reef Islands and on the south coast of Santa Cruz. Areal excavations at Nenumbo (SE-RF-2; Figure 33.3) in the Reef Islands revealed the first Lapita house, along with considerable quantities of obsidian derived from sources in the Bismarck Archipelago (Sheppard and Green 1991) and found in all the Lapita sites of Temotu, demonstrating direct ongoing contact with that region. Other exotic materials, including the metavolcanic rock used to make a large adze (Figure 33.4) and chert from the Eastern Solomons, suggest other connections back to the west. The Nenumbo site produced one of the first large assemblages of Lapita ceramics, including the first discovery of a complete anthropomorphic face motif (Figure 33.5), possibly representing a Lapita ancestor. Dating these sites was difficult given poor charcoal preservation. However, they provided a chronology that suggested movement into Remote Oceania began after 3200 BP.



Figure 33.4. Adze, Nenumbo (Site SE-RF-2).

Source: Anthropology Photo Archive, University of Auckland.



Figure 33.5. Anthropomorphic motif (Site SE-RF-2).

Source: Anthropology Photo Archive, University of Auckland.

The success of finding early Lapita occupation in Temotu called for further research in the region in Stage 2 (1977–79) of the project (Yen 1982). This included additional excavation of Lapita and post-Lapita sites in the Reef Islands by Green, additional fieldwork in Santa Cruz (Patrick McCoy and Paul Cleghorn), Vanikoro (Kirch), the Banks Islands (Ward, see also Litster et al., **Chapter 32**, this volume) and Anuta (Kirch), and substantial work on Tikopia (Kirch and Yen) and in the Duff Group (Foss Leach and Janet Davidson). The latter two projects led to significant monographs and well-developed culture histories of these Polynesian Outliers (Kirch and Yen 1982; Leach and Davison 2008).

This team-based research program provided one of the first models in the Pacific of an integrated anthropological approach to archaeology. This stemmed both from Green's training and commitment to American four-field anthropology (archaeology, anthropology, linguistics, biological anthropology), but also from his early training in geology and interest

in the development of archaeological science. As indicated above, this program provided early training for an influential generation of Pacific archaeologists and served as a model for the Lapita Homeland Project, which in the 1980s turned to finding Lapita origins in the Bismarck Archipelago (Allen and Gosden 1991; see also Litster et al., **Chapter 32**, this volume).

In a career spanning 50 years, Green worked across the breadth of the Pacific from New Britain in the Bismarck Archipelago of New Guinea to Hawai'i, New Zealand and Easter Island in East Polynesia, conducting or sponsoring, through students and colleagues, research in most places in between. He maintained a wide network of colleagues from whom he was always searching for the latest data to incorporate into his growing understanding of Pacific prehistory. His publication list was extensive yet contained few books, and he liked to say he was as proud of his small contributions to local societies or journals as of his top-ranked journal articles. In his later career, however, he was especially proud of his co-authored book with Patrick Kirch (Kirch and Green 2001), *Hawaiki, Ancestral Polynesia: An Essay in Historical Anthropology*, which allowed him to express his dedication to a historical anthropology; to integrate his long interest in linguistics with his archaeological knowledge; and to provide, in one place, his model of the development and growth of Polynesia, which was the core of his academic life and interest.

Objects highlighted in this chapter were on display at the Auckland War Memorial Museum Tāmaki Paenga Hira from February to May 2020.

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