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A REAPPRAISAL OF THE MAORI ROCK DRAWINGS AT COOK'S COVE,
TOLAGA BAY

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The 1769 visit of Captain Cook and the Endeavour to New Zealand is well documented (Beaglehole, 1963,1968). One landing place was Cook's Cove, Tolaga Bay (Fig.1) where the Endeavour anchored on 23 October 1769 to load firewood, water and other supplies. The crew gained an insight into the culture of local people due to the friendly reception they received. Banks and Solander explored the area and collected a wide variety of flora and fauna. A public walkway now provides access to Cook's Cove.

Although Cook's Cove has been studied in relation to the 1769 visit of the Endeavour, little of the archaeological history of Te Aitanga-a-Hauiti hapu of the Ngati Porou tribe was recorded until the recent site survey of the Uawa catchment by Kevin Jones (Jones, 1982).

In the 19th and early 20th centuries historians often visited Cook's Cove, retracing the steps of Cook in New Zealand (Duncan, 1902; Morris, 1900). When Polack visited Cook's Cove in the 1830s he was guided around the area by Te Kani-O-Takirau who pointed out specific areas of interest. One such area was a shelter known as Tupaia's cave.

"Around the surface of the cavern are many native delineations, executed with charcoal of ships, canoes sailing, men and women, dogs and pigs, and some obscenities drawn with tolerable accuracy. Above our reach, and evidently faded by time, was the representation of a ship and some boats, which were unanimously pointed out to me, by all present, as the productions of the faithful Tahitian follower of Cook, (Tupia.) This also had evidently been done by similar materials."

(Polack,1838 II:135-6)

From this description Trotter and McCulloch concluded that the drawings were of post-European origin (Trotter and McCulloch, 1981:17). Davidson also commented that, "the faintest of these were supposed to have been drawn by Tupaia, the Tahitian on Cook's first voyage, and the others during the intervening sixty years" (Davidson, 1984:215). Yet Polack's description clearly stated that only a specific group of drawings were pointed out to him as being drawn by Tupaia.

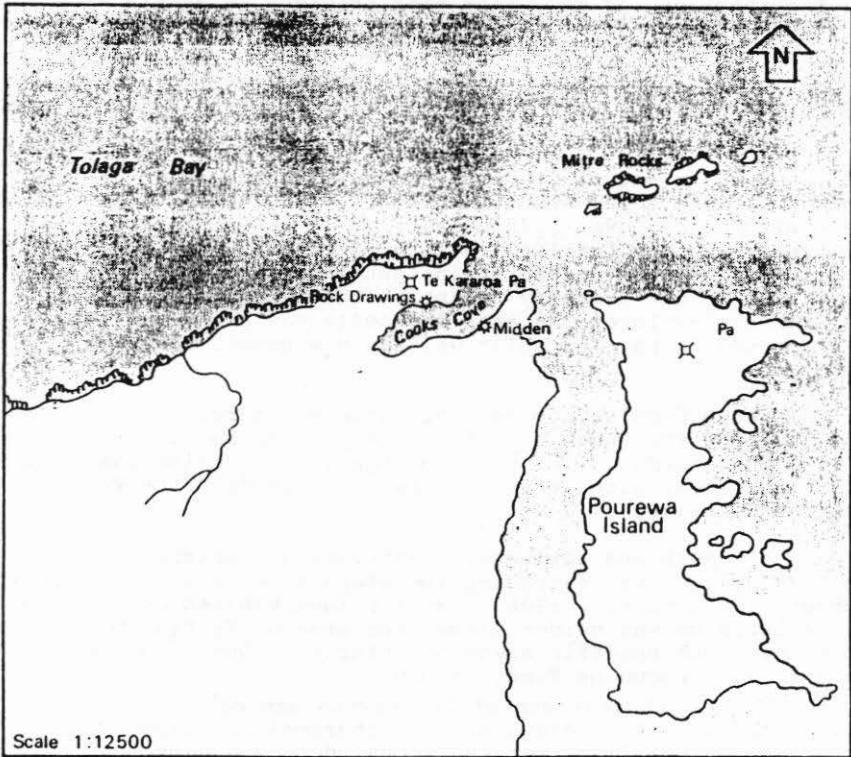
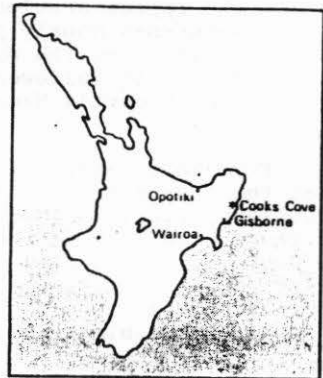


FIGURE 1. Location map and map of archaeological features, Cook's Cove, Tolaga Bay.



Forty years after Polack's visit to the area,

"Mr. Locke visited the cavern and inspected it, and found that while it bore ample marks of old "delineations" such were so worn and defaced by the incessant action of the elements, and also so high over head as to be scarcely discernible. The traditions, however, of the Maoris, respecting them and the place, were quite in keeping with Polack's relation."

(Colenso, 1879:149)

Davidson suggests that this deterioration over a period of 40 years, "shows that any prehistoric drawings which may once have existed would not have survived in this region" (Davidson, 1984:215). However, in 1902 the cave was visited by Russell Duncan who noticed "a drawing of two whales very well done. The delineation was well out of reach, and evidently done with a long charcoal-stick (Duncan, 1902:39).

The hypothesis presented in this paper is that it cannot be assumed from Polack's description of the Cook's Cove drawings that they are all post-European, and that some of these drawings fit into the pattern of pre-European rock drawings which can be established for the North Island.

Previous research into North Island rock drawings

In 1927 Archey recorded at the Arapuni Gorge drawings of canoes, possibly war canoes, drawn in black, with red ochre marks also on the wall not associated with the drawings. The next North Island drawings recorded were also canoes at Lake Tarawera. Gregg (1956) located a series of red ochre motifs and an associated 'ladder' type of drawing, also in red.

Davis and Ambrose (1957) conducted a detailed study of the rock drawings in the Waipapa district which were to be destroyed by a hydro scheme. They were all in red or black, some infilled and others outlined. The subject matter included canoes, dogs, human figures and spirals. Since 1957 few rock drawings have been recorded which generally take the form of pigment markings rather than designs.

Description

Cook's Cove is a small inlet on the south side of Tolaga Bay. A narrow ridge of Tertiary sandstone separates the cove from Tolaga Bay (Wellman, 1962). Tupaia's Cave is on the south side of this ridge overlooking Cook's Cove (Figs.2 and



FIGURE 2. Cook's Cove, Tolaga Bay behind.



FIGURE 3. Cave with drawings, Cook's Cove.

3). Due to its southerly aspect there has been extensive weathering of the shelter walls and remaining drawings are very faded and flaked.

The drawings have all been executed in black charcoal, possibly by using a stick from the fire. However, in the South Island, Haast noted that some black designs were "painted with charcoal mixed with some oily animal substance" (Haast, 1877:45).

The shelter contains eleven groups of drawings, some of which consist of an individual mark and others which are grouped drawings. Many drawings are now indistinguishable shapes and lines. One however, appears to represent a double-hulled canoe (Fig.4) similar to that observed by Tasman in 1642 (see Davidson, 1984:11). Two daubs of red ochre are superimposed over it. The reason for this is unknown but it does also occur in some drawings recorded in the South Island (Fomison, n.d.a). Red ochre is traditionally related to tapu and it is possible that these daubs were superimposed to emphasise the mana of the canoe or maybe that they were added later to remove the tapu from the drawings and the shelter.

Another drawing of particular interest is placed high on the roof of the shelter. It is badly faded but appears to represent the remains of at least one fish drawing, possibly that described by Duncan in 1902. Beside the drawing is a Maori word, either "teaikahita" or "teaihehita". The addition of names to earlier drawings is recorded in the South Island by Fomison (n.d.a.), and the presence of writing does not necessarily confirm a post-European date for the associated drawing. The name "Mokona", written in missionary script, also appears in the shelter.

One other distinctive drawing depicts part of a canoe, similar to those described by Archey (1927) and Hamilton (1925). Associated with this canoe is a linear drawing which may represent the occupants of the canoe or their descendants. Fomison (n.d.b.) emphasised the presence of ancestor veneration in narrative scenes in the South Island and proposed this evidence as an indication of the serious intent of the artists.

Analysis of the drawings is difficult due to their faded state. Parts of some are obscured by minute plant growth. Colour slides give clear reproductions of what was visible in the shelter. Black and white infra-red photographs using an 88A filter were taken of all rock drawings at Cook's Cove but despite successes achieved by Davis and Ambrose (1957) these did not show more detail than was visible to the naked

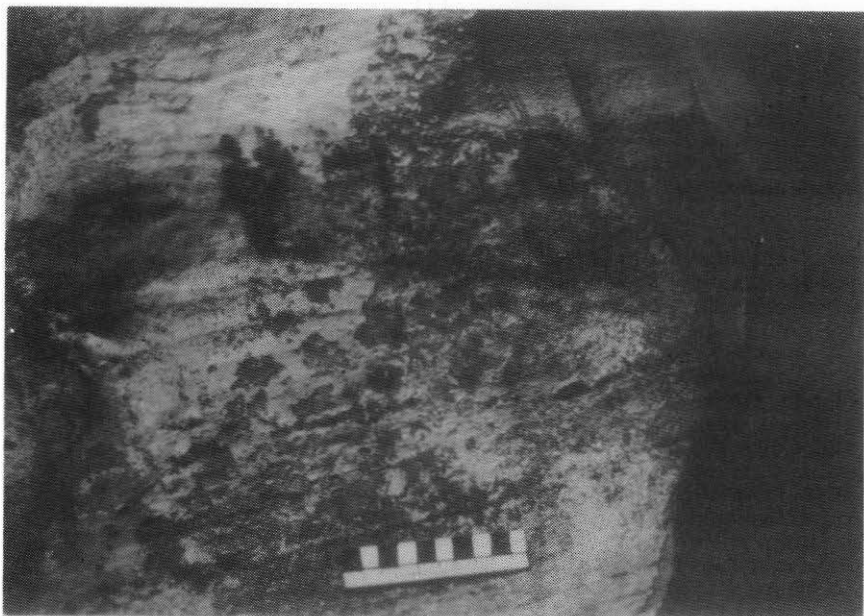


FIGURE 4. Cook's Cove drawing.

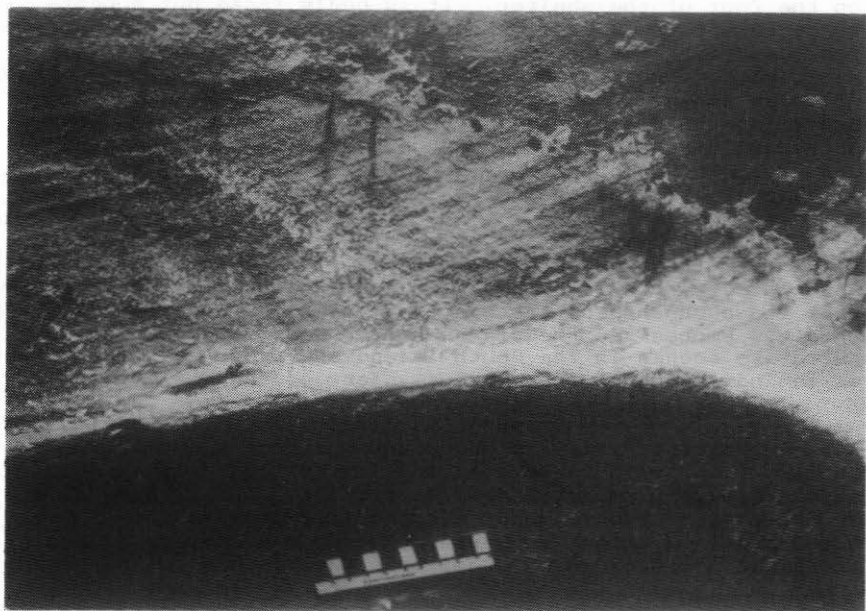


FIGURE 5. Cook's Cove drawing.

eye. Experiments are continuing using a Wratten no.25 filter, colour infra-red and ultra violet.

Discussion and conclusions

Tolaga Bay has been intensively surveyed by Kevin Jones (Jones, 1982). Early occupation of the area has been established with dates of between 1230 A.D. and 1410 A.D. for gardening in the Mangaheia Valley. Te Kararoa pa on the hill above the shelter was noted by Banks in 1769 (Beaglehole, 1963; Jones, 1983). Further evidence for prehistoric occupation comes from a midden located on the southern side of the cove, opposite the shelter. Shell from this midden has been dated to 700 BP±56 (McFadgen, 1982; Wellman, 1982) suggesting a settlement date for Cook's Cove as early as 1200 A.D. which correlates well with dates for Tolaga Bay.

Although there is no proven association between drawings on a shelter wall and the archaeological remains in the floor, analysis of both features in the South Island does suggest that there could be a correlation. No archaeological excavation has been carried out in the shelter at Cook's Cove, but in 1960 members of the Regional Committee of the New Zealand Historic Places Trust put down a test square through about two feet of midden (Gisborne Herald, 12 April 1960).

The drawings depicting canoes, and a fish may represent prehistoric use of the shelter which continued into the European period with the presence of the missionary script writing. A non-destructive method does not yet exist for dating rock art in New Zealand. Although a tentative chronology based on superimpositions does exist for drawings in North Otago and South Canterbury (Fomison, n.d.b.), the few recorded rock drawings in the North Island precludes such analysis. Until the North Island is systematically surveyed for rock drawings and paintings, the problem will remain unresolved.

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