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ABSTRACTS FROM THESES,
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Abstracts from four M.A. theses in archaeology completed during the period late 1985, early 1986 are given below. Copies are held in the Department of Anthropology, University of Auckland, where they may be consulted in the Piddington Room. Xerox copies may be made available through the main library, Auckland University at cost, plus GST and postage. These are subject to the usual restrictions applying to theses, namely the understanding that their use is for private research and not publication.

Pamela I. Chester, Forest Clearance in the Bay of Islands. Anthropology Department, Auckland University. 1 page abstract; xii, 359 pp., 23 plates, 26 figures, 6 tables, 6 appendices.

Recent Palynological studies have shown that New Zealand was almost entirely covered with forest during the Holocene prior to the arrival of Polynesian settlers, and also that there was rapid clearance of forest after Polynesian arrival.

Palynological methods are used in an attempt to discover the composition of original vegetation, date of arrival of Polynesians, and prehistoric land use practices in the Bay of Islands region, Northland.

The fire and vegetation histories are reconstructed from five cores extracted from peat swamps at three different localities chosen so that any difference in the time of settlement between the coast and inland would be demonstrated. The cores were dated by radiocarbon, and volcanic ash at the coastal site. The coastal sequence, near Waitangi, spans the last 2500 years while the main inland sequence, near Pakaraka, spans 1100 years; thus the presently accepted date of arrival of Polynesians in New Zealand is included at both sites. The third sequence nearby is poorly dated but appears to be more recent.

The relationship between modern pollen rain and modern vegetation was examined to aid interpretation of the fossil pollen sequences.

Extensive anthropogenic forest clearance occurred at the main inland locality at about A.D. 1400 (based on interpolated dates), consistent with radiocarbon dates of archaeological material from recently excavated sites in the vicinity.

Initial disturbance of the coastal vegetation occurred at about A.D. 600, which is earlier than the earliest date (about A.D. 1000) given so far for forest clearance in New Zealand; extensive forest clearance had occurred at this locality by A.D. 1000, and almost total forest destruction by A.D. 1650. Appearance of extensive grassland vegetation at all sites, together with pollen of European introduction at about A.D. 1800 clearly marks the commencement of European pastoral settlement.

Leigh Johnson, Aspects of the Prehistory of the Far Northern Valley Systems. Anthropology Department, Auckland University. 2 page abstract; x, 257 pp., 31 figures (including 11 plates).

This thesis examines aspects of prehistoric cultural adaptation in alluvial valley environments in far northern New Zealand.

The prehistory of the Oruru and Kaitaia valley systems appears characterised by a controversial traditional history, items of early material culture and agricultural systems, providing the background context in which many elements of this thesis were formulated.

Regional traditions are examined individually, collectively and in conjunction with historical information. The conclusion is drawn that the diffusionist model of northern migration from the far northern valley systems is an invalid ethnographic construct. A new interpretation of far northern traditional history is offered.

The early wood carvings recovered from the valley systems are examined and their cultural and chronological context explored through an analysis of their decorative motifs and compositional arrangement. Stylistic affinities with items of later material culture are examined and tentative suggestions are made as to the nature of early cultural adaptation in the region.

Valley agricultural systems are assessed in relation to the major resource bands in the land unit, and where possible, structural components are defined and preliminary typologies offered. While there are a significant number of unknown variables, the indications are that valley agriculture was characterised by the fundamental intensive/extensive - wetland/dryland dichotomy.

The interpretation of traditional history offered in this thesis is seen as a principal factor in why the correlation between settlement pattern and social structure is so difficult

to reconstruct. Using an 18th century Maori account of the Oruru valley, a hypothetical correlation is constructed and the location of the major components of the settlement system in relation to the lineal arrangement of resource bands is explored.

This thesis concludes by briefly expanding on aspects of protohistory in an attempt to focus attention on the environmental rather than the mythological context of cultural adaptation in the region and to outline the possibility that many problems in New Zealand archaeology may derive from an historical anthropology.

Keren Lilburn, Maori Pa: A Method for Analyzing Settlements. Anthropology Department, Auckland University. 1 page abstract; x, 153 pp., 86 figures (including 18 plates), 15 tables; 2 appendices.

Over 5500 Maori pa have been recorded in New Zealand. While most occur in the northern half of the North Island in areas suitable for kumara horticulture, pa do occur as far south as the south of the South Island. Consequently, the function of pa has generally been explained in terms of horticulture, population pressure, and warfare. It is my contention that the variability in the size and form of pa, which has been commented on since 1769 when Cook rediscovered New Zealand, represents a wider range of functions.

To date, analyses of pa have focused on topography, defensive device, or the place of pa in the settlement system. No rigorous analysis of either intra-site organisation or inter-site variability has been undertaken. This is in part due to the lack of an analytical method with which to carry out such studies.

This thesis presents a method for analysing pa which includes data collection (field surveying), analysis, and interpretation. Although the focus is on pa, non-pa are not discounted. The emphasis is on the flat areas within pa, particularly their size and organisation. It is suggested that rather than assuming a function for pa based on ethnographic or other preconceptions, analyses should be designed so that the data can test hypotheses. To facilitate such analyses, both a Component Classification and an Ekistical Typology were developed. The former is an analytical tool while the latter has implications for the development of settlements as a response to changing social pressures. Rather than suggesting answers to archaeological problems, the thesis provides a method for asking and solving questions.

David G. Veart, Stone Structures and Landuse at Three South Auckland Volcanic Sites. Anthropology Department, Auckland University. 1 page abstract; xvi, 248 pp., 53 figures, 2 aerial photographs.

The last ten years has seen an increasing amount of archaeological work on the volcanic stone field systems of South Auckland. This work uses this material to discuss and compare the volcanic areas at Wiri, East Tamaki and Otuaataua.

This discussion is in two parts. Firstly the stone structures are examined as to possible function with particular emphasis on boundaries, gardens, mounds and habitation. The excavated material from the Wiri area is used to interpret the structures of East Tamaki and Otuaataua where little or no excavation has taken place.

The second part of this work then attempts to place the stone structures in the context of the three survey areas. Each area is examined with particular emphasis on those parts mapped or surveyed by the author. The type and placement of the boundary systems on the landscape is discussed. Gardens, mound areas, habitation and possible habitation structures are examined and an attempt is made to explain the placement of these within the landuse system.

The idea of 'zonation' is also examined. That is, that some structures tend to co-relate with specific landform types within the volcanic area.

Finally the landuse patterns of the three areas are contrasted and an attempt is made to place these within a possible sequence.