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AN UNDEFENDED SETTLEMENT AT KAURI POINT, TAURANGA DISTRICT

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SUMMARY:

Three objectives of the operations on the Kauri Point Peninsular in Tauranga Harbour are reported on. The first is a survey of the principal sites in the area including not only defended pa, but also undefended village settlements and dry land shell middens. Secondly, a cluster of dry land shell middens were sampled and these samples analyzed to show their composition and the variation among the members of shellfish species found in them. Lastly, a single undefended settlement was excavated and 18 pits exposed, including 14 belonging to a single period of occupation in which a layout according to a pattern is evident. The implications of the shell sample analysis, midden composition, and the structural and other evidence from the undefended settlement are discussed and it is concluded that further interpretations of the evidence will depend on the results of the analysis of similar materials from the better defined chronological periods on the Kauri Point pa.

INTRODUCTION:

One challenge to the archaeologist is assembling the evidence for successive phases of development by which the Polynesian populations of New Zealand have evolved into that which we call Maori. To meet this challenge one of the first steps to be taken is the construction of regional sequences in which one aspect follows another, each aspect characterizing a distinct period in the history of that region. To do this will require the recording and excavation of numbers of sites in every region, because we cannot expect any one site or even a small handful of them to give a complete picture of life for every period.

One reason for this situation is, of course, the fact that it is extremely unlikely that any site will ever be found which contains a complete record of all periods stratified in neat layers. Another reason related to the first is that settlement patterns found in New Zealand seem to exhibit marked changes from the earliest to the latest phases. However, the tendency has been to interpret the earliest sites as a settlement type of hunting camps simply because only one type of site component was ever explored. Thus, the inference has been that people at this stage were dependent on hunting and gathering, and that it was only after the introduction of agriculture and a subsequent growth in population with a stability in the type of settlement, that the earlier settlement pattern gave way

to permanently occupied fortified pa. While true, perhaps in the most general sort of way, these generalizations are too simple a summary of what is a far more complicated process.

In the Auckland Province we have learned that site components other than beach middens belong with the earlier phases, and that each stage of development is likely to exhibit a wider range of settlement types than the one before. In short, the changes in settlement pattern are extremely complicated and it is necessary to think of them in respect to the functional types of structures involved, the internal arrangements of the structures within the site, the location of settlement components to other types of site components, and the relationship of sites of all types to the local geographical setting, as well as the broader relationships between various clusters of site components. Not only is it impossible to assume that hunting camps, semi-permanent settlements, or undefended villages disappeared with the building of the larger and more complex defended pa, it is also impossible to assume that the complex and fortified pa were continuously inhabited permanent villages or that they all belong to one period or phase. Thus, while there are a few examples of one phase pa known, these are the exception and not the rule, and most pa sites that have been investigated exhibit a complex history of settlement with changes in many of the aspects of settlement pattern that are outlined above.

Even when we are able to sort this complex history of occupation into a number of periods as has been done at Kauri Point pa (Ambrose, 1962) we are still not in a position to reconstruct a completely adequate characterization of an aspect for a region. As Groube (1962, N.Z. Arch. Assoc. Conference) has persuasively argued, the evidence, both ethnohistorical and archaeological, is that pa sites were not continuously occupied throughout the course of the year, but only during periods of stress or as places of refuge and served as nuclear centres from which the exploitation of a given area belonging to a local group could be carried out. In fact, given the seasonality of the Maori exploitation of various resource zones and the type of shifting agriculture they often practised, one would expect this to be reflected in the archaeological record by a number of types of site components, all belonging to a single regional period. This would be especially true in the later phases of the sequence when population densities and systematic agriculture brought greater stability of population within well defined territories.

In practical terms this means that in a locality like Kauri Point with three major fortified pa, one would expect to find as adjuncts to it small undefended settlement components near the garden areas, midden components of various types where the activities of fishing, the gathering of shellfish and the cooking of these products took place, and farther back in the bush, components belonging to hunting and trading camps. Clearly the re-

construction of the later aspects in North Island prehistory require not only the excavation of complex pa, but as well the excavation of less imposing undefended village settlements, and the sampling of middens throughout the locality. It also implies that attention be given to a fairly intensive site survey within the locality. It was with these factors in mind that I undertook as my part of the Kauri Point operations carried out by the University of Auckland Archaeological Society this last summer, the excavations of one of the undefended pit complexes, the sampling of the dry land middens, and the recording of the principal sites in the area. These were intended to serve as a complimentary operation to the final excavations on the pa by Mr. W. Ambrose and the highly rewarding excavations in the swamp beside the pa conducted by Mr. F.W. Shawcross.

As the larger pa seem to have been continually re-inhabited and rebuilt, they may be expected to hold the chronological key for a given locality. Recorded in the succession of layers one expects a fairly complete stratigraphic sequence to which both portable and structural artifacts may be dated. This contrasts with other types of site components where stratification may be poor or lacking and the interval of time recorded extremely brief.

I have tentatively suggested that this re-occupation of major pa sites, frequently with a complete reorganization of the internal structural features of the settlement is related to the shifting cultivation practiced with the sweet potato, and have in mind parallels with sweet potato cultivation in parts of the Eastern New Guinea Highlands provided me in discussions with Dr. R. Bulmer. In some situations, after an initial period in which cultivation around a particular nuclear settlement has exhausted the gardens in a portion of the region controlled by a local group, the nuclear centre is shifted for a period of years, and the group returns to the first settlement in question only after the secondary bush has regenerated on the garden areas and soil fertility has been restored. This type of permanent settlement within a region tends to develop into a cyclical shifting of the nuclear settlement that to my mind would serve as one explanation for the variety and number of pa in some regions and the number of periods of occupation on one pa in other regions, especially where the potential defensive locations are not numerous. In the second case, the changed composition of the group, when it returns to a former settlement, would make necessary the extensive re-orientation of the internal arrangements, but maintain the cultural continuity throughout successive periods of occupation.

If these interpretations of successive occupations at pa like Kauri Point are one day established, a second task will be to identify and excavate some of the less imposing remains in the locality that are associated with each period of occupation on the pa itself, depending on the stratigraphic operations on the pa for definition of their chronological position in the sequence. In the excavations which we carried out at what is essentially

a small one-phase undefended pit village and in the results of our first analysis of the midden samples, this is precisely the position in which we find ourselves. The further interpretation of our results, as will become obvious below, will depend on the results obtained at the Kauri Point pa.

The point this introduction is making is one of archaeological strategy, of the kinds of questions one must ask, and the conditions which their answers require, if one is not to dig solely in the hope that he will find out something. As R.G. Collingwood relates:-

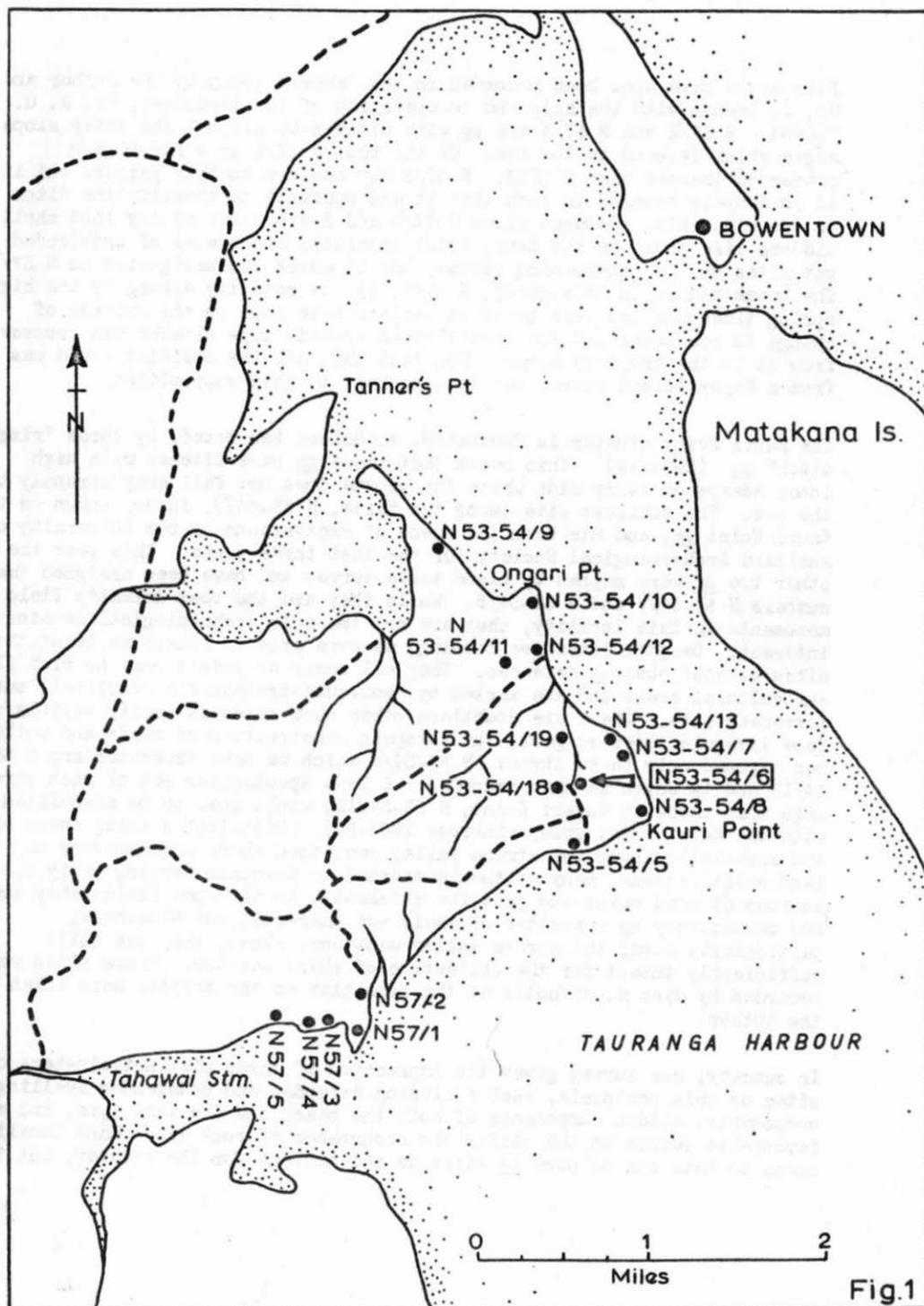
"...Long practice in excavations had taught me that one condition - indeed the most important condition - of success was that the person responsible for a piece of digging, however small and however large, should know exactly why he was doing it. He must first of all decide what he wants to find out, and then decide what kind of digging will show it to him." (1939:122)

SURVEY OF SITES:

The major sites still visible as surface features on the Kauri-Ongari Point peninsula in the Tauranga Harbour are shown in the map of Figure 1. Excluded from the map are the 13 shell middens that are distributed along the small stream valley leading toward the sea that begins below site N 53-54/6 and N 53-54/18. Most of these shell middens are on the seaward side of the stream next to various flats that border the valley. The remaining middens lie along the path that leads to site N 53-54/7.

The sites we have recorded cluster into three distinct geographic localities of Ongari Point, Kauri Point, and the north shore of the embayment created by the Tahawai stream. However, neither the Tahawai or Ongari Point localities have been as intensively surveyed as the area surrounding the Kauri Point pa.

Four sites have been recorded in the Ongari Point group by members of the Society under the direction of Miss A. Leahy. They are N 53-54/10: a terraced headland pa in which double banks, probably with ditches, cut off the pa from the mainland, N 53-54/12: a cave shelter with rock carvings reported on by Ambrose (1961) and Schofield (1962), and N 53-54/11: a terraced hillside settlement with a few pits. The beach midden on the sand spit, N 53-54/9, probably belongs to this group also. The road running down the ridge toward the beach also exposes some additional shell-filled pits in section in the road cutting, thus indicating the existence of other undefended pit complexes in this locality no longer visible on the surface.



KAURI POINT PENINSULA

Fig.1

Four sites have also been recorded in the Tahawai group by the Author and Mr. T. Keenan with the help and co-operation of the landowner, Mr. J. G. McLeod. N 57/2 and N 57/3 are pa with ditches on all but the steep slope edges which descend to the sea. Of the two, N 57/2 is a far better preserved example than N 57/3. N 57/5 may conform to this pattern but it is so densely covered in bush that it was possible to identify the ditch on one side only. Between sites N 57/3 and 5 are numerous dry land shell middens like those in the Kauri Point locality, and traces of undefended pit sites on the intervening ridges, one of which was designated as N 57/4. The beach midden in this group, N 57/1, is now actively eroded by the high spring tides and may well be of an earlier date both on the grounds of change in sea level and the fact that an archaic type 4A adze was recovered from it by the property owner. The fact that all the obsidian found was from a Mayor Island source may lead support to this supposition.

The Kauri Point cluster is dominated, as Golson has noted, by three "ring ditch" pa (1961:14). This means that these pa have ditches with high inner scarps on every side where the ground does not fall away abruptly to the sea. The smallest site among the three, N 53-54/5, is now known as the Kauri Point pa, and has been the scene of excavations by the University of Auckland Archaeological Society for the last three years. This year the other two pa were mapped by plane table survey and have been assigned the numbers N 53-54/7 and N 53-54/8. While they are the most dramatic field monuments in this locality, they are not the sole archaeological remains of interest. Despite intensive farming, we were able to locate at least three sites without obvious defences. They all occur on points next to rich flat agricultural areas and are marked by semi-subterranean and completely subterranean pits. There are doubtless other such sites as barely visible surface irregularities suggest, but European construction of roads and buildings has exposed only these three: N 53-54/6 which we have excavated and N 53-54/18 and 19 which we have recorded. A less spectacular set of rock carvings than those at Ongari Point, N 53-54/13, would seem to be associated with the Kauri Point group (Ambrose 1961:50). Distributed among these sites and especially along the stream valley mentioned above are numerous dry land shell middens, many of them disturbed by European farming or by use as sources of road metal and grit for chickens. In the open fields they are now marked only by a scatter of shell and charcoal, but elsewhere, particularly along the stream valley mentioned above, they are still sufficiently intact for the collection of shell samples. These sites were recorded by Miss M. Nicholls at the same time as the samples were taken by the Author.

In summary, our survey gives the impression of three distinct clusters of sites on this peninsula, each including defended and undefended dwelling components, midden components of both the beach and dry land type, and at favourable points on the cliffs the occurrence of rock art. Each locality seems to have one or more pa sites as the nucleus for the cluster, but in

the best recorded locality, the impression is very strong that settlement was not confined solely to these well defended centres, but was somewhat dispersed within the locality.

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FOLLOWING UP A SPOT FIND

Site S22/2

Mark L. Johnstone

In late 1959 Mr. Rex Woolley, an employee on the Chaytor Estate at Marshlands near Blenheim, was ploughing a large paddock sprawling across a low sandy ridge some three quarters of a mile from the sea when happening to glance sideways at his last set of furrows, he found a particularly fine specimen of a Duff type 1A dark argillite adze. Unfortunately, though quite naturally, he only noted the approximate area of his find.

The paddock was enormous, and apart from an intrusion of scrubcovered swamp taking up a large part of the southern side, it was almost featureless and almost flat. At one end of the paddock was one of the station houses and a few pine trees. The spot find was made within a few hundred yards of a corner and reasonably close to the house.