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ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES OF THE ENGAGEMENT AT TE TAPIRI, 1865

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Four gunfighting paa were recorded during a site survey of Whirinaki State Forest 58. These are historically documented and all relate to one incident in May 1865. A brief historical account can be digested from Best (1925:582-588) and Cowan (1923,II:80-91). These accounts are frequently very different, Best's information coming from the Ngati Whare and Tuhoë, while Cowan got his from the Ngati Manawa. Names of paa are taken from Cowan.

A party of Hauhau led by Kereopa, intended passing from the Urewera to the Waikato, following a well known trail via Heruiwi and across the Kaingaroa Plains. In May 1865, the Ngati Manawa being staunch Queenites, decided to stop this Hauhau party crossing their territory around Heruiwi, on the westernmost range of the Urewera mountains.

A party of about forty Ngati Manawa, most of the tribe, went to Heruiwi and hurriedly built a paa called Te Tapiri (N95/58) on top of the range at about 655m above sea level. A message to Arawa tribes for help, led to the arrival of about thirty Ngati Rangitihi from Tarawera. Another paa, Okupu (N95/5) was built on the adjacent hill, 70m to the south, to relieve the overcrowded fortification at Te Tapiri (see Fig.1 and Plate 1).

When the Hauhau arrived they encamped at an old clearing called Hinamoki, on the forest edge and built two paa (N95/19 & /56). Successive parties of allies increased their numbers to several hundred strong. The Hauhau also had a lightly palisaded camp called Te Huru-huru and a small paa called Tuahu-a-te-Atua (N95/22). This site is on the highest point of the range, 712.5m above sea level.

Skirmishing was carried on for about a month during which the Ngati Manawa lost access to their water supply, a stream halfway between the opposing camps. Eventually short of food, water and ammunition, they abandoned their paa during the night and fled toward Murapara. They were pursued in the morning but not attacked.

Okupu (N95/5) Figure 1. Okupu paa is built on a small hill atop the main range. The platform 13 x 9m, is surrounded by its own bank, 1m high and 1.5m thick. This in turn is surrounded by a gunpit/ditch and bank on three sides. This outer bank is up to 3m high and 2m thick.

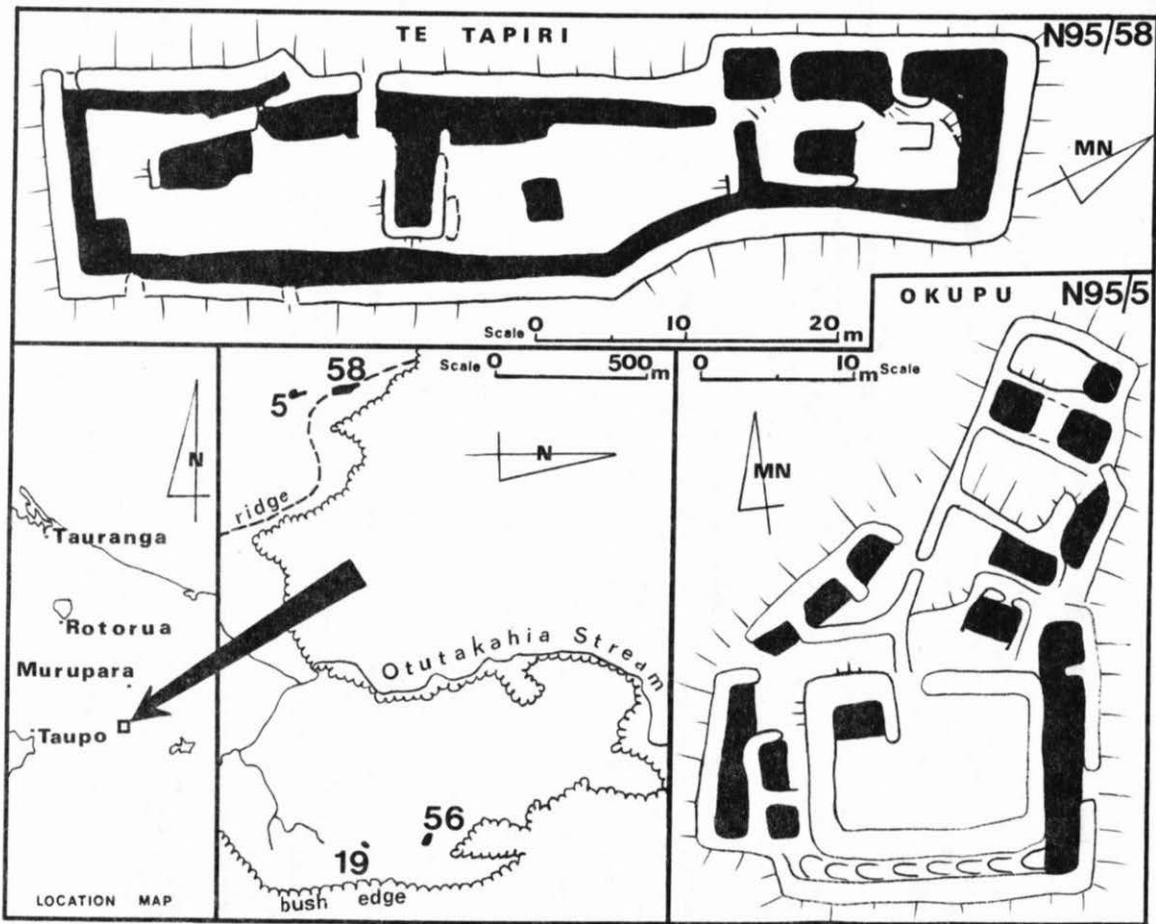


FIGURE 1. Location maps, and Te Tapiri and Okupu paa. Gun and hut pits shown black.

The fourth side steps down the slope in a series of pits, each with their own low bank. This paa overlooks Te Tapiri, only 71m away to the north. It covers about 700m².

Te Tapiri (N95/58) Figure 1. This long narrow paa is built on the flat ridge 71m north of Okupu. It is enclosed by an outer bank, still 2m thick and 2m high on the outside. There are two possible gateways. Behind the outer bank is the long gunpit or ditch, 1-2m wide and 0.3-1.5m deep. The pit in the south-east corner is still deep enough, 1.5m., to enable a gun at the shoulder to be aimed across the top of the bank. There are three probable hut floors. A large part of the interior has no features and appears unused.

Hinamoki I (N95/19) Figure 2. A small paa built on a small round 15m high hill. The hilltop has been modified to form a 19 x 11m mound about 3m high. Surrounding this is a ditch and outer bank. The outer bank, 2m wide, is now only up to 50cm higher than the bottom of the

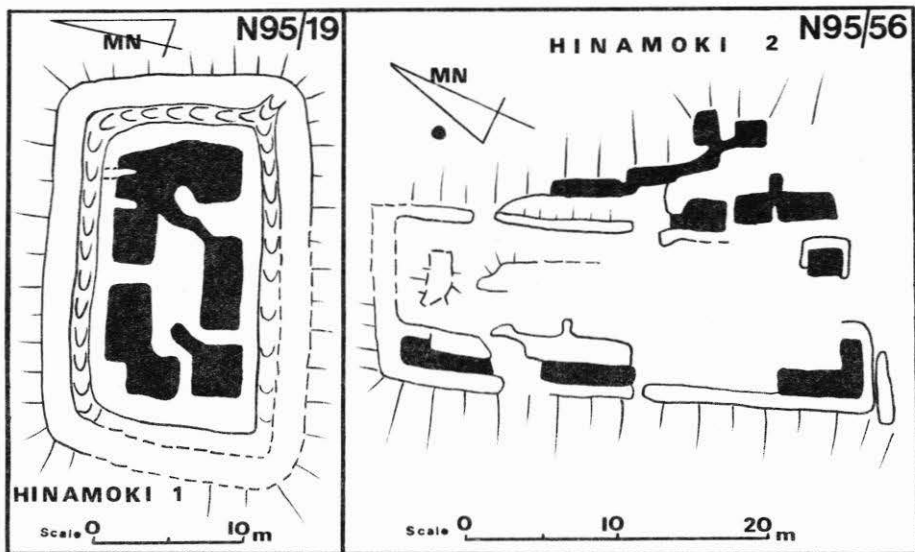


FIGURE 2. The Hinamoki sites.

m wide ditch. The central mound stands abruptly above this and has five pits dug into it, from 1.3 to 1.6m deep. Small, shallow passages interconnect some pits.

Hinamoki II (N95/56) Figure 2. This paa has a very low profile on the flat top of a ridge heading NW. It is 150m north of Hinamoki I. The site has been disturbed by bulldozing along the ridge during land preparation in 1959. The main area, enclosed by a bank/gunpit is 30 x 10m. There is an extended area of pits/interconnecting ditches on the shoulder of the ridge on the east side. These six pits are 1 to 1.5m deep, and have no banks. There is a bell pit (not shown in the figure. It is under the MN arrow).

Tuahu-a-te-Atua (N95/22), was a small rectangular paa on the flattened top of the highest point on the range. It was defended by gunpits and banks, and had a lower terrace with an outer bank. This site is now occupied by the Forest Service fire lookout.

These sites were recorded during a site survey of Whirinaki (SF 58) in July - September 1978. Flat areas on all sites have been periodically pigrooted but the banks, walls and pits are mostly in excellent condition. The camp called Te Huruhuru was not found.

References

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| Best, E. | 1972 | <u>Tuhoe</u> . Second edition. A.H. and A.W. Reed, Wellington. |
| Cowan, J. | 1923 | <u>The New Zealand Wars</u> . Government Printer, Wellington. |



TE TAPIRI. Aerial photograph of Te Tapiri (left) and Okupu paa.