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ARCHAEOLOGY OF MAPOUTAHI PA, OTAGO

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Abstract

In this paper an attempt is made to interpret remaining records of an excavation on the Mapoutahi Pa site S164/13 which took place over Easter of 1966 under the direction of L. M. Groube. The historical setting and layout of the site is reported; the stratigraphy is reconstructed and some interpretation is offered of the faunal and geological material.

INTRODUCTION

Part of the legacy of an archaeological revival in Otago in the 1960s are the unanalysed remains from a number of excavations. For several reasons, including a demand for the space these collections occupy, it has been decided to write up known details about some of these sites so that the basic information will be available to archaeologists throughout New Zealand. The inherent problems for Mapoutahi at least cannot be under-estimated. Some of the material is very poorly provenanced and documented, confusion seems to have existed over the stratigraphy of the site at the time of excavation, and no notes or site drawings exist in accessible form. As a result, the report has been compiled from the recollections of excavators, their photographs, occasional cryptic drawings and notes on bags, a few notes in the N.Z.A.A. files, and a measure of calculated guess-work.

The site, a fortified pa (N.Z.A.A. Site No. S164/13), is situated on a small precipitous headland, locally known as Goat Island, which lies at the western end of Purakanui Beach, about ten miles north-east of Dunedin. It commands a strategic position overlooking the entrances of two estuaries; it is also sited at the junction of two major resource zones: a long sandy beach, and a stretch of rocky shore.

TRADITIONAL HISTORY

References to the history of Mapoutahi Pa are scattered and confused, but most authors agree that the pa was occupied in the middle

of the eighteenth century during a time of intra-tribal Kai (Ngai) Tahu warfare (Bathgate, 1904: 6; Reed, 1947: 41; Taylor, 1950: 120).

There appears to have been an alliance between two factions; one led by Te Wera and occupying the Huriawa Pa (N.Z.A.A. Site No. S155/1), and another led by either Patuki (Bathgate, 1904: 7), or Pahiaukea (Taylor, 1950: 120), occupying Mapoutahi. A third faction led by Taoka besieged Huriawa with little success, and turned its attentions, in the middle of winter, to Mapoutahi. Here the siege was successful and the majority of the inhabitants were killed. Further reference to this event may be found in the name of the peninsula on which Mapoutahi stands; Mata awhe awhe meaning "dead gathered in a heap" (Taylor, 1950: 120), and possibly Purakanui, meaning "heaped up" (Bathgate, 1904: 7). No references indicated subsequent occupation of the pa.

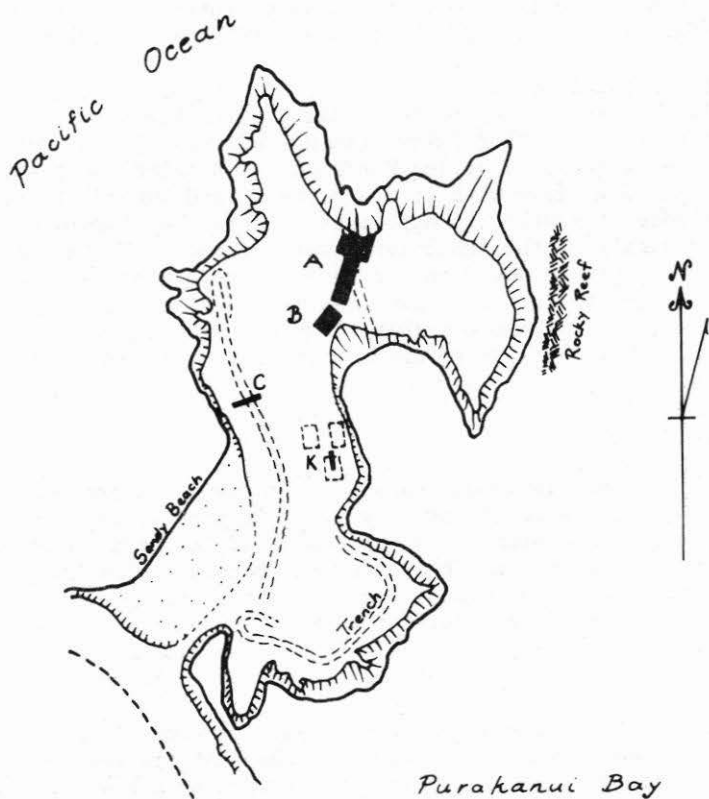
LATER HISTORY

The "... well defined remnants of Maori-made trenches, parapets, and other fortifications" noted by H. D. Skinner (1929: 3) in an address before the Anthropological Branch of the Royal Society, led Steele of the New Zealand Institute and Swanson of the Harbour Board, to carry out a compass survey (Fig. 1), particularly as the area had suffered some damage from railway works. In addition, a model was made of the site which, complete with imaginative additions of numerous houses is still on display in the Otago Museum.

Mapoutahi Pa, like many Otago sites, has had a long history of fossicking, and it was not until the 1960s that systematic excavations began. About December 1961 Hardwicke Knight excavated six square metres in a position within the area of huts shown on the 1929 map (Fig. 1). He found a "paepae", a rectangular stone fireplace, several adze fragments, worked "kokowai" and a polisher. Seal, fish and dog bone occurred as midden material together with some shell, most of which was cockle (Chione stutchburyi) (H. Knight, field notes, 1961).

A further excavation took place in Easter 1966 under the direction of L. M. Groube, and it is this which is the subject of the remainder of this report. Three areas were opened up (Fig. 1). Area A was dug in four metre squares with one metre baulks (Fig. 2), and Area B was 7 by 5 metres. Area C was a single trench, probably one metre wide by 10 long (judging from photographs), laid across the defensive trench on the south-western slope of the peninsula (Fig. 1).

MAPOUTAH I PA



REPERENCE

Using map, trenches and trenches of the State
and District (1929)

Scale

K
ABC

Legend for the area of the map

Legend for the area of the map

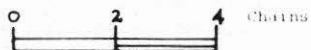


FIG. 1

The records for each of these areas vary considerably in usefulness. Those for Area A are by far the most comprehensive. They suggest that it was laid out relative to magnetic north; the north-south axis numbering 0-6, the east-west lettered C, D, E (Fig. 2). The stratigraphy of the area is not very clear and may have been quite complex; certainly the proliferation of layer numbers and names suggests some uncertainty in the field. There seem to have been at least three superimposed cultural layers. The "Topsoil" (T) is probably the same as another referred to as "Upper Cultural Layer" (U.C.L.); the intermediate layer is probably the "Topsoil-Subsoil Interface" (T.S.I.), and the bottom layer is designated "Subsoil" (S), and may well correspond to Layer 2 (L. 2). A considerable amount of material was labelled "4". None of the several interpretations thought of is singularly convincing, and consequently this material has been treated separately.

Areas B and C are even more obscure. The size and position of B relative to Area A, and a sketch of the position of some finds within it are all that is known. Although Area C was photographed during excavation the rather complex excavation sequences shown cannot be explained. All the material labelled "Trench Annex L-3" has been assigned to this area in the absence of other reasonable possibilities.

Some structural evidence was found in Area A. In square CO a scoop-hearth packed with burnt and fragmented human bone was found and derives from at least one mature male (R. J. Scarlett, pers. comm.). Postholes and a raised area ran diagonally across part of this area (Fig. 2) and consideration of the 1929 map (Fig. 1) suggests these may represent part of the defences. Apart from scatters of midden refuse, the only other structural evidence found was a hearth in square D6.

Although certain correlations in the stratigraphy have been suggested and arguments made for assigning materials to particular areas, the designations of square and layer used by the excavators have been retained for the more detailed analysis.

DISCUSSION

Geological Material

A considerable variety of stone types, distinguished in the hand specimen, occurred in most of the squares, except the peripheral squares CO, E 1 and E 2. Flake material may have been absent from these squares or simply not recorded. The variety of obsidian, chalcedony, chert, argillite, and 'greenstone' present in the site indicate access to

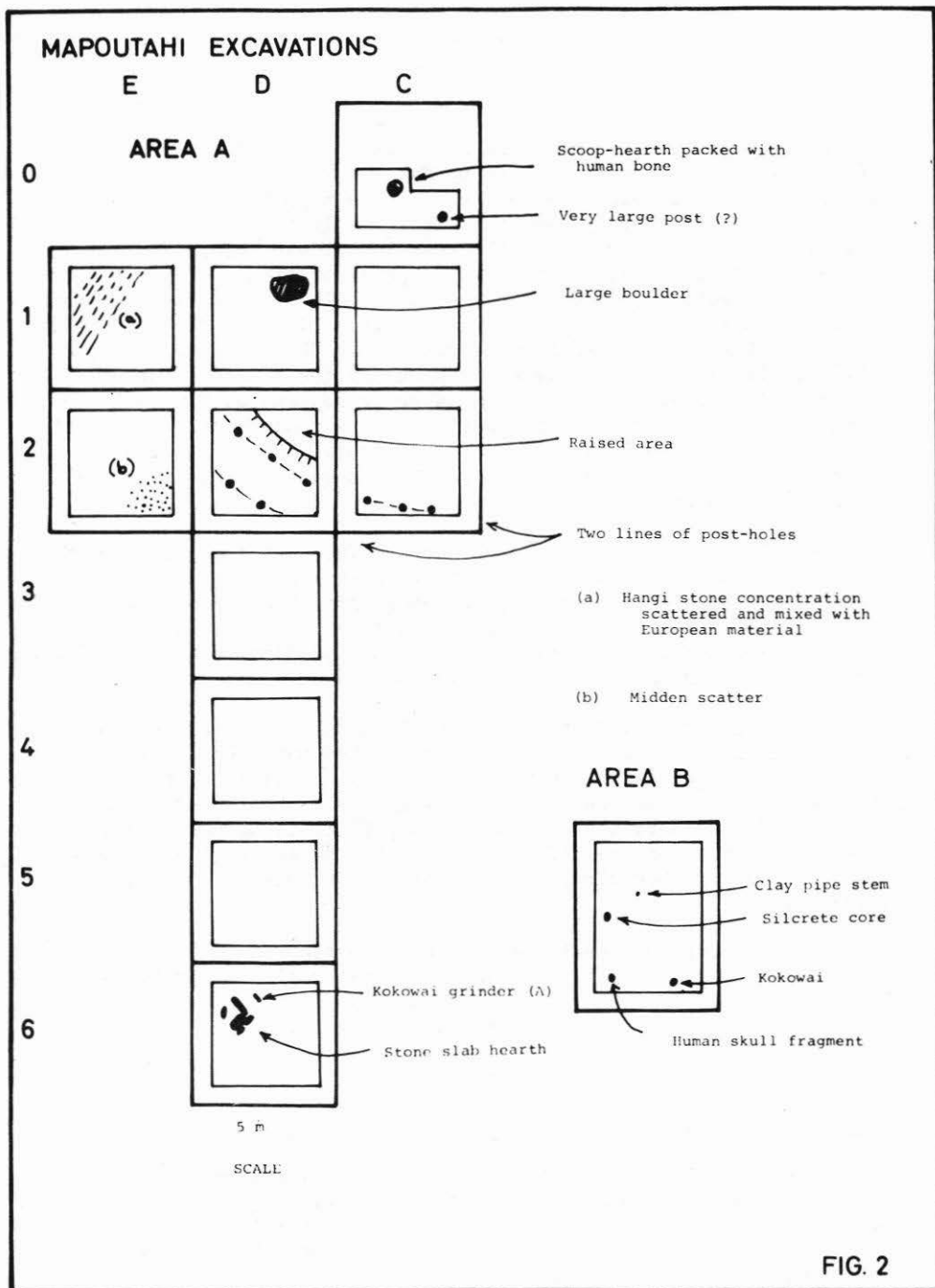


FIG. 2

materials from distant sources. On the other hand the water-rolled silcretes, opal-jasper (or Otago Peninsula 'puddingstone'), Moeraki chalcedony and procellanite suggest exploitation of more local resources. There is considerable evidence for the working of stone on the site. Obsidian, silcrete, and greenstone (in the shape of an unfinished adze of 2B form (Fig. 3: g) and two flakes) have all probably been worked on the site. An abraded (Fig. 3: d) may also have been used in the working of greenstone. Raw 'kokowai' and possible kokowai grinders (Fig. 3: a, b, c) suggest the preparation of this material.

Faunal material

The faunal evidence indicates localised collecting, fowling and fishing, during summer at least. This is suggested by the dominance of barracouta amongst the fish bones. Only one extinct species is present, the New Zealand Quail (Coturnix novaezealandiae), but its extinction is a post-contact occurrence.

More detailed analyses of the geological and faunal material are contained in the Appendix.

European material

Apart from the small scatter of European material found in square E1, the only other material was a clay pipe stem piece from Area B (Fig. 3: f) and a small translucent blue trade bread from square D6, Layer 2 (Fig. 3: e). The relationship between this and the rest of the material from the site is obviously important, but insufficient stratigraphical information precludes anything more than the suggestion that all the material appears to be late.

CONCLUSION

It is apparent from the analysis that Mapoutahi Pa could well have been a site of some importance in the prehistory of coastal Otago. Both the faunal and the geological material could warrant further study, but in the absence of more information on stratigraphy and site layout such analysis is not justified. In the meantime this report has shown that there is nothing in the material inconsistent with the traditional accounts of the site's history.

FIG. 3



E: Glass bead

F: Clay pipe stem



D: Sandstone (?) cutter



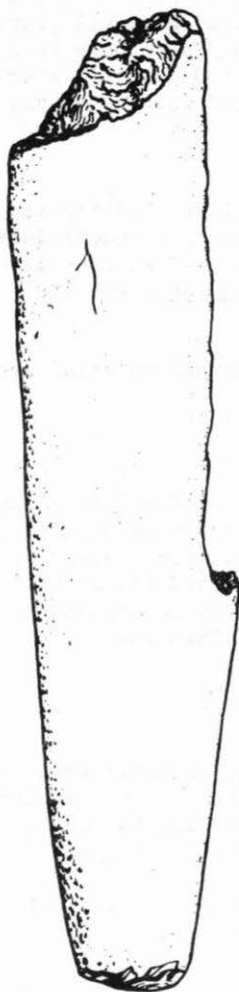
G: Nephrite adze



C: Schistose grinder



H: Silcrete flake



A: Kokowai Schistose grinder



B: Kokowai Schistose grinder



I: Silcrete core

APPENDIX

1. Geological material

For the sake of brevity we have arranged the geological debris found on the site into a small number of basic types. The location of specimens of each of these is tabulated below, where possible in terms of both time and space.

In the table below the stone types are represented as follows:

- A = Grey obsidian
- B = Chalcedony
- E1 = Chalcedony of the "Moeraki type"
- C = Chert
- C1 = Porcellanite (vitrified mudstone)
- C2 = Opal-jasper (Otago Peninsula "Puddingstone")
- D = Nephrite
- D1 = Serpentine
- D2 = Bowenite
- E = Silcrete
- E1 = Silcrete
- F = Sandstone
- G = Basalt
- G1 = Green argillite (similar to the Riverton material)
- G2 = Black argillite (similar to the Nelson-Marlborough Material)
- H = Ochre

N.B. The numbers presented below in brackets indicate the number of specimens of each type found.

TABLE 1. GEOLOGICAL MATERIAL

<u>Square</u>	<u>Layer</u>	<u>Geological Debris</u>
C0		None recovered
C1	T.S.	A
	T.S.I.	B, C2
C2	T.S.	B
	T.S.I.	C
	L.2	A (2), D1 (2), E (2)
D1	T.S.	B
D2	U.C.L.	B (2), C (2), E, G
	T.S.I.	A
	Subsoil	A (2), D2
D3	T.S.I.	A, B, G1
	Subsoil	A (3), B (7), C2, E, E1
	No layer given	B, C2
D4	T.S.	B
	T.S.I.	C 2 (2), B (16)
	L.2	B (7), B1
D5	L.2	A (2), B
	No layer given	E
D6	L.2	B (2), C1, C2, E (7), G
"E6/D6" = Area B		B, E1
Area C	No layer given	B, H
"Trench Annex"	L.3	B (2), D, G
"4"	No layer given	C, G, G2 (2), E1, F (2)

2. Faunal Material

Area A

The few molluscan remains scattered through this area are detailed below:

Square C1 (T)	1 individual of	<u>Perna canaliculus</u>
" C2 (L.2)	" " "	<u>Chione stutchburyi</u>
" D4 (T.S.I.)	" " "	<u>Perna canaliculus</u>
" D6 (L.2)	" " "	<u>P. canaliculus</u> and <u>C. stutchburyi</u>
" E2 (T.S.I.)	4 " "	<u>Amphidesma australe</u>

63 barracouta vertebrae (Thyrsites atun), and assorted eroded cranial bones suggest at least two individuals in square C0, along with one specimen of hapuku (Polyprion oxygeneios).

One red cod (Physiculus bacchus), one barracouta, and one dog (Canis familiaris), are indicated in Square E2 (T.S.I.), while the right mandible and humerus of an immature dog in Square D5 (L.2), suggest the presence of another individual.

A few fragments of human bone, apart from the pile in Square C0, were scattered in Squares D3 (T.S.I.), C2 (L.2), and D6 (L.2). A fragment of bone from spotted shag (Stictocarbo punctatus), comes from this area but cannot be provenanced more exactly.

Area B

No midden was collected in this area except a badly weathered section of human cranium, probably the temporal bone.

Area C

All faunal material from the "Trench Annex", which we believe to be Area C, appears to come from Layer 3 which, as was discussed above, cannot be positioned spatially or stratigraphically. Molluscan remains are few and similar to elsewhere in the site, consisting of:

- 7 individuals of Amphibola crenata,
- 1 of Amphidesma australe,
- 1 of Chione stutchburyi, and
- 1 of Perna canaliculus.

Bird remains comprised at least one individual each of spotted shag, and white-capped mollymawk (Diomedea cauta sub-species). Barracouta dominate the fish remains. A count of right dentaries

indicated at least six individuals. There is also both a large and a small specimen of hapuku. An assortment of dog bones indicate at least one individual, and a section of rib may be from the southern fur seal (Arctocephalus forsteri).

3. Unprovenanced Material

There are three groups of unprovenanced material which cannot be placed. The first occurred in bags marked only with the number "4". The material comprises an atlas and limb fragments of dog, a small piece of human bone, a distal portion of the right tibio-tarsus of New Zealand Quail (Coturnix novaezealandiae), nine individuals of freshwater mussel (Hydridella menziesi menziesi), and a quantity of unidentifiable mammal and bird bone fragments.

The second group, with a circled "3" on the bags, is made up of a part clavicle of paradise duck (Tadorna variegata), a proximal fragment of the left carpo-metacarpus and also finger and radius fragments of Diomedea sp., a mandible, tibia and rib fragments of dog, and the pile of burnt human bones referred to above. As all this material was labelled the same, it is possible that it belongs to Square CO. The final unprovenanced bone is a part humerus of a mollymawk, partially worked into a bird-spear (?) point, and found on the excavation dump.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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