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**NEW ZEALAND ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER**



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CLASSIC MAORI BURIAL AND CREMATION IN THE MANUKAU AREA

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The various Maori forms of disposal of human remains in the Manukau area during the Classic period (ca. A.D. 1650-1800) ranged from simple concealment of disarticulated bones in isolated rock fissures to extended burial close to occupation sites. The following notes on Classic Maori burial of human remains are based on field observations made during archaeological field surveys of six Manukau pa: Otuataua, Ellett's Mt, Mt Gabriel, Pukeiti, Puketutu Island and Mt Puhinui. Although a number of the burial forms dealt with have been observed and recorded by others (for example Duff, 1956:45), no regional classification has been attempted. Consequently, the tentative classification adopted here is the first to be drawn up for, at least, a definite locality. The notes covering concealment of cremated remains are also advanced with a tentative locality classification.

Manukau geology and tribal history

The archaeological survey area covered in this paper (Taylor, 1961:30) consists of a quarternary volcanic plateau and island characterised by a series of cones sporadically active over the past 50,000 years. With its highly fertile loamy soil and equitable climate, the area was ideal for pre-historic settlement. During the Classic period it was under intensive cultivation; the cones, with associated open settlements, being the focal point of walled garden areas covering many hectares. Having a complex sequence of occupation from ca. A.D. 1400 to about the close of the eighteenth century, the terraced and fortified cones were occupied by various tribal groups and confederations. Among them (from ca. 1700), the Waiohua, Ngati Paoa, and Ngati Whatua (Davidson, 1982:28). Since 1950 three Manukau pa have been extensively quarried; while Mt Gabriel and Otuataua have been completely destroyed. Archaeological excavation has been carried out on Ellett's Mt and Puhinui (Lawlor, 1980:11-23).

Death customs and ideology

The following observations on Archaic and Classic Maori death and burial customs, provides a useful introductory framework for an understanding of a traditional funeral ideology reflected in Manukau burial practice. Death customs varied among tribes, as did the concept of death (Taylor, 1855:95).

Following the ritual of the mourning ceremony or tangihanga (Oppenheim, 1973:60), the differing forms of disposal of the dead were undertaken; the tangihanga being marked by: sacred magico-religious rites relevant to the importance of the deceased; marae welcome to visiting mourners; laying of the body in state, accompanied by lamenting and laceration (haehae); the possible killing of attendant slaves (koangaumu) and the suicide of widows termed whakamomori (Tregear, 1904: 390); feasting and ritual dance, and funeral ritual of either temporary or permanent burial or (alternatively) the ritual exposure of the corpse on elevated platforms or in trees.

With temporary burial (nohunga) and exposure, a two year period normally elapsed before the rukutanga tuarua or highly sacred bone scraping ceremony was performed. In this ceremony, usually performed by priests or the close relatives of the deceased, bones were cleaned, painted with red ochre and shark oil, and wrapped in fine matting before being placed in a mausoleum, bone chest, or hidden in a tapu cave or other safe place of concealment. Accompanied by elaborate ceremonial rites, the rukutanga tuarua ceremony was regarded, in some tribal areas, more sacred than the tangihanga and burial (Taylor, 1855:60). Head preservation and skull retainment, by relatives, was practiced as recorded in South Island burials (Oppenheim, 1973:63), where grave goods in extended and trussed burials has been documented (Duff, 1956:30). In his review of Maori funerary practice, Oppenheim claims a possible distinction between Archaic and Classic practice (Oppenheim 1973:63); primary burial being characteristic of Archaic, as against a Classic tradition of bone concealment only, a view however, that may not apply to Manukau, on the basis of field recording and Davidson's observation (Davidson, 1982:42 that: "No one form of disposal of the dead can be said to have been predominant in the (Auckland region)."

### The burials

For the purpose of this paper, burial is concealment of human remains, in its broadest sense. Given the brief of the survey of the six Manukau pa, recording of burials was restricted to an immediate basic documentation, before such sites as Otuataua and Mt Gabriel were completely lost to quarrying or to a more intensive farming involving site destruction. For a more recent and detailed account of Classic Maori burial, the reader is referred to Leach (1979:205-13) where several of the burial postures described below are recorded, and where skull removal, dismemberment and orientation are noted, with the observation that earth burial was the most common mode of burial recorded in Palliser Bay.

Cave burial. This form of concealment of human remains is common near settlement areas - Otuataua and Pukeiti. The normally fully articulated skeletons are principally adults and lie in an extended position either on their side (facing west) or on their backs; the disarticulated bones are usually ochred and, occasionally, covered with blocks of scoria. Where there has been post-burial interference, it is normally the cranium and mandible that has been removed. Occasionally, there is evidence that caves used for burial purposes were later occupied, after the partial removal or resiting of bones within caves. The entrances to undisturbed burial caves, rua koiwi, are generally sealed with scoria blocks and soil.

Rock and fissure burial. A number of disarticulated adult skeletons have been found concealed in mass-rock fissures and natural rock piles close to occupation areas of occupation areas of Mt Puhinui, Otuataua and Puketutu Island. In this form of burial, normally found close to the sea or on a hillside facing the sea, the bones are generally ochred with, occasionally, the cranium and 'long bones' (femur, tibia) missing.

Rectangular pit burial. Common on Puketutu Island, Pukeiti, Otuataua and Elletts Mt or Maungataketake, this form of burial is found in series of three or four or in isolation. Varying in depth from 18 inches to two feet below ground level, they are found close to settlement areas; the normally fully articulated skeletons lying on their sides, facing west or east, or on their backs with a head orientation east. Both pre-and-post burial interference has been observed; the cranium or/and mandible generally missing.

Rectangular pit and mound burial. In this form of burial the usually articulated skeleton lies either on its side (facing west) or on its back, with eastern orientation, in a ca. 18 inches deep rectangular pit covered with soil and scoria blocks continued ca. 6-8 inches above ground level. Observed in groups of three or four, and in isolation, this form of burial has been recorded close to house and storage pits near the base of Otuataua and Pukeiti.

Rock mound burial. Found near Otuataua and Ellett's Mt this form of burial consists of a rectangular, square or oval coverage of loose rocks; the usually ochred, friable and disarticulated, but often complete, skeleton lying on ground level. Normally sited some distance from occupation areas, they have been observed in groups and in isolation, their height varying from 18 inches to three feet.

Trussed pit burial. The skeleton in this form of burial is found in a sitting position facing west, and is normally complete. Three of this form of inhumation have been found on the terracing of Mt Puhinui and Ellett's Mt. All three were ca. two feet below ground level.

Circular pit burial. Several burials of this form have been observed on Otuataua and Mt Puhinui. Excavated into terracing (18-24 inches below ground level; ca. two feet diameter) the pits contain disarticulated skeletons with, normally, cranium and mandible absent - the remaining bones being ochred.

Midden burial. Generally the skeletons found in this type of burial are complete and articulated. But occasionally 'long bones', cranium and/or mandible are absent. Excavated to a depth of ca. two feet, the pits are usually square or rectangular and have been observed in settlement areas of Otuataua and Mt Gabriel. The middens consist mainly of cockles (huangi), scallops (tipa), oyster (tio) and the bones of a variety of fish; with fragmented oven stones being commonly present.

Swamp burial. Several burials of this form have been reported by farmers draining land close to Mt Gabriel (Mokoia) and Otuataua. Weighed down with blocks of scoria or a single large boulder, the flax-bound skeletons are normally complete (but disarticulated) and lie, normally about three feet from the surface.

Tree burial. The bones of disarticulated skeletons found in trees, usually puriri, are invariably ochred, while the mandible and/or cranium are normally missing. Artefacts, particularly adzes, have been found in association with this form of burial at Mt Puhinui and Otuataua. Artefacts have not been found in association with any other type of Manukau burial; grave goods are completely unknown in the area.

Sand-dune burial. A number of burials of this form have been found close to Ellett's Mt and Otuataua. Usually skeletons are complete and articulated although mandible, crania, femur and tibia elements are absent. When complete and articulated, skeletons generally lie on their sides facing west. Traces of red ochre on disarticulated bones are common, while depth of burials vary greatly.

Unit burial. This form of burial covers single skeletal units such as the, usually ochred, cranium and 'long bones' (femur, tibia). This type of burial involves concealment

of single and multiple units in rock fissures, trees, small caves and under loose rock, as observed at Otuaataua, Mt Puhinui and on Puketutu Island. Normally, several teeth of mandibles found in this form of burial are missing (from healthy jaws), while it is not uncommon to find several crania of adults/children concealed together.

Cremation. As a method of disposing of bodies, cremation was not uncommon during the Classic period and is well documented; the charred bones of certain individuals (killed in battle, for example) being later buried by relatives. At Mt Puhinui, Otuaataua and Pukeiti three forms of post-cremation burial were observed:

1. Concealment of remains, normally sections of the femur and tibia under well-defined mounds of scoria; the charred bone at ground level and ochred.
2. Concealment of charred and ochred skeletal units in caves and massed rock fissures. The most common unit being fragmented crania and/or mandibles.
3. Pit burial of cremated and ochred bones.

Of the types of cremation burial, the first is particularly common at Mt Puhinui. Charred bones have been recorded at this pa site bearing traces of ochre and obsidian lacerations; the carefully constructed mounds, as in the second and third form of cremation, being close to settlement areas. Cannibalism is well attested for in the literature. Consequently, some of the charred skeletal material recorded at Manukau pa, could be from open fire (but not oven) debris recovered later by returning relatives to a pa abandoned by a successful assault force. This would perhaps explain the ochred charred bones in Manukau burials.

### Conclusions

In this survey of Classic Maori burial practice in the western Manukau area, a relatively wide range of techniques in disposing of the dead has been recorded in field research without archaeological excavation; all observations on burials however, having their source in the activities of pa quarrying and in farm development, the drainage of swamps, land clearance. During the period of the survey, Otuaataua and the unique Mokoia complex were levelled with serious loss to the historical landscape. Both pa were important centres of settlement and agriculture, but were virtually unrecorded; leaving some urgency in the recording of remaining archaeological features such as the extensive walled gardens of Otuaataua and its walled house sites, burial caves, middens and auxiliary settlement storage complexes.

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