



NEW ZEALAND
ARCHAEOLOGICAL
ASSOCIATION

NEW ZEALAND ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER



This document is made available by The New Zealand Archaeological Association under the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License.

To view a copy of this license, visit
<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/>.

INVESTIGATIONS AT KAURI POINT, KATIKATI, WESTERN BAY OF PLENTY(1) Introduction

by J. Golson

Auckland University excavations over four years in the Hauraki Gulf and on the Coromandel Peninsula have defined the content and characteristics of the New Zealand Archaic (Moa-hunter) in part of the Auckland province. The hope had been entertained that other excavations, for example at Mt. Wellington, might contribute to a definition of the Classic Maori phase of the New Zealand prehistory and to the question of the relationship between Archaic and Classic Maori. Since these excavations did not produce the desired results, the University Archaeological Society set itself in 1960 the task of discovering a site where these problems could be tackled with a fair expectation of success.

On the archaeological evidence three major areas seemed likely to contain the wanted site: these were North Auckland, particularly the Bay of Islands and the Hokianga, the Waikato-Waipua valleys with extensions westward to the sea at Kawhia and Raglan and eastwards in the Hauraki Plains, and the Bay of Plenty west of Opotiki. All these areas are characterised by greater concentration of adzes of Classic Maori than of Archaic type.¹

On various grounds it was decided to concentrate the search on the Waikato west coast and on the Bay of Plenty. A further interesting consideration came to apply here, for not only did the archaeological evidence suggest these areas as important for the problem in hand, but the areas concerned contain the traditional landing places of the canoes of the Fleet whose arrival some theories make responsible for the cultural changes which were under study.

The Waikato fieldwork failed to discover an appropriate site.

The Bay of Plenty fieldwork hinged on the little peninsula of Maketu, traditionally the landing place of the Arawa canoe, and ran eastwards into Matatua territory at Whakatane, westwards into the Tauranga Harbour, where Archaic finds begin to be well represented.

The typical site of this central Bay of Plenty coastline is what might be called the ring ditch pa, a hill or ridge fort relying for defence on one or more ditches and banks that encircle the site completely or as completely as the natural defences make necessary.² The pa constitutes a definite type, markedly different from the scarped and terraced sites of other regions. And since pa building is generally considered to be a sign of Classic Maori and not of Archaic activity, it was decided that the site to be chosen for excavation should be a ring ditch pa.

Other considerations served to narrow the field of search even further. Obviously if we hoped to investigate on the chosen site the nature of Classic Maori, the pa selected should be one known to have produced artefacts already or likely to do so. In other words, it must be a site with striking evidence of habitation, and the best criterion of this appeared to be the presence of abundant midden material in association.

So potential sites in the specified area were visited and assessed: Otamarakau and Pukehina to the east of Maketu, both big and important pa, the former productive of adzes over the years, the latter with a 15 ft. shell midden at its base, but both ruled out by reason of size and the presence of Maori cemeteries in the middle: the extensive and impressive Papanoa complex between Te Puke and Tauranga, barren in the main, however, of midden; the small sites on the headlands that finger out into the eastern reaches of Tauranga Harbour and face the Mt. Maungamui entrance, Te Puna, Otumoetai and Maungatapu, areas, however, where European settlement is thick.

Circumstances in part dictated, in part encouraged a continuation of the search to the west. The ring ditch pa is as predominant a form in the western Tauranga Harbour as further east. Tribally, as Mr. Melvin in his article in this Newsletter shows, the western Harbour was settled from the east. In addition by following our evidence west we were approaching more nearly the area of our Coromandel investigations and thus increasing our chances of ensuring the cultural overlap in which we were interested.

We therefore passed over the middle reaches of Tauranga Harbour and took up the search again in the area of Katikati, Athenree and the Bowentown Heads. Here the situation at the eastern Harbour is reproduced. The big pa at Bowentown commands the western entrance to the Harbour as Mr. Maungamui does the east. Facing towards this entrance from inside the Harbour are two peninsulas, Tanners Point and Kauri Point, each with a number of pa. The pa are characterised by abundant shell middens on their flanks. Visible beyond Bowentown is Mayor Island, a major source of obsidian as Mr. Hans Pos describes in a later article in this Newsletter, and at European contact within the tribal domains of the Tauranga Harbour people, The Ngaiterangi. Bowentown itself is at the southern end of Waihi Beach and the seven miles of Waihi Beach have been one of the richest hunting grounds of Archaic artefacts in New Zealand with adzes and one-piece moabone fishhooks identical with the Coromandel forms.

All this seemed to add up to the archaeological promised land. At Kauri Point three pa lay on Crown Land. No obstacle and every encouragement was given to excavation by the authorities concerned. The smallest and least disturbed of the three sites was chosen for investigation.

As a tailpiece to this introductory statement, it is fitting that some acknowledgement be made to the help given by members of the

Archaeological Association during the course of the fieldwork it describes. Mr. R. G. W. Jolly of Papakura gave the benefit of his local contacts and field experience in the work on the Waikato west coast. Mr. W. A. Pullar and Mr. Jack London of Whakatane did the same for their area and Mr. P. Crichton of Tauranga for his. Mr. D. M. Stafford and Mr. C. A. Watt of Rotorua organised the search at Maketu and eastwards. The value of an Association such as ours is well-illustrated in the success of organised effort of the type that has been described.

This is a logical point to give general acknowledgements: to Dave Simmons of the Auckland Society, who helped materially in the choice of site, to Mr. C.A. Moore of Athenree, and Messrs. I. Blakeman, A. H. Honeyfield, R. Larsen, E. Noble, D. Noble and I. Noble of Kauri Point; and to all who gave of their time to dig at the site.

References

1. Golson in Anthropology in the South Seas, 1959, pp. 68-69
2. Golson in Journal of the Polynesian Society, March, 1957, Vol. 66 No.1, pp. 78-81.

(2) Tauranga : an Historical Outline up to 1826

by L. W. Melvin

Reference to the existence of pre-Fleet people in the Bay of Plenty occurs persistently amongst the early writers such as Grey, Wilson, Gudgeon, Best and Graham; and in the recent writers Kelly and Grace. Of these, Judge J. A. Wilson was the only one with any particular interest in Tauranga, and he alone has made any effort to detail some of our pre-European history.¹ But our indebtedness to Wilson should be tempered by the fact that at times he was careless with facts in his European history. Inevitably this raises a doubt about his writings on the Maori.

Wilson came to the conclusion that a considerable population inhabited the country in pre-Fleet times, their tribal nomenclature being influenced frequently by the kind of food notable in their particular localities. Thus, at Maketu where streams and swamps yielded fish and eels plentifully, were to be found the Waiohna (waters of abundance); and at Tauranga where the sea teemed with fish, lived the Purupekenga (full net). He also mentions another pre-Fleet tribe at Tauranga, the Ngamarama, whom he located about the middle and western portions of the district.