



NEW ZEALAND
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NEW ZEALAND ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER



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Diagnostic Surface Horizons

The natural soil has been mentioned and a comment may not be amiss here. The American Soil Survey pays great attention to the effects of soil disturbance by man even to the extent of dismissing properties in the A horizon as criteria for soil classification at the high level. They do recognise, however, six diagnostic surface horizons of which two are of importance to field archaeology. One is called the anthropic epipedon and refers to land under long-continued systems of farming involving large additions of organic matter, nitrogen and phosphate, and the other is the plaggen epipedon, a man-made surface layer commonly identified from its content of artefacts and even spade marks (!).

In New Zealand, the European has not settled long enough for his kind of farming to effect an anthropic horizon, but the Maori has left his impress permanently with his practice of gravel mulching and such soils N.H. Taylor has called Maori soils. In the Bay of Plenty region, a plaggen horizon could be identified more by disturbance of the ash-bed stratigraphy than by the finding of artefacts.

Reference

- (1) An Ulster Plantation (2nd edition) 1950, p.31

(5) Conclusions and Hypotheses

by J. Golson

Excavations in the long trench at the Kauri Point site have demonstrated the existence of three periods of structural activity. Little is known about the first of these but the second is abundantly represented in a complex series of sunken structures disturbed by the ditch and overlain by the bank of the pa of period 3.

The pits in the terraces and the summit of the terraced hill are plausibly assigned to period 2. A number of these have been totally excavated and exhibit a number of types (habitation, storage) and a patterning of associated types.

Excavations on the northern flank of the pa confirm the lateness of the defences. The deep shell middens through which the outer ditch cuts are most logically attributed to the intensive occupation of period 2.

The structural sequence established within the area of the pa itself cannot firmly be correlated with that established outside it. However, resemblances in detail between the structures excavated inside and outside suggest that period 2 (if not period 1) was represented within the area of the ditches and before their construction.

Structural periods 1 and 2 are separated by the accumulation in the dip between the ditched and terraced hills of a formation up to 2ft. thick of gritty sand and redeposited volcanic ash. In their technical reports Mr. Schofield and Mr. Pullar have discussed the nature of this fill. Though differing in details, they both regard the formation in question as of progressive, though not necessarily prolonged, accumulation.

The utilisation of the site in period 3 differs completely in type from that in period 2 and the two periods appear to be separated by a distinct break in stratigraphy. Before the defences were built, the underlying pits had been partly or wholly filled by natural and human agency. On the terraces and the hilltop occupation took place over the infilled pits of period 2. The topsoil which contains the evidence of this occupation here is equated by Mr. Pullar with the topsoil and shell representing activities following on the construction of the outer bank defence in the dip at the bottom of the hill.

A similar break in sequence and in type of occupation has been noted in connection with the excavations within the area of the pa. It may be that the history of the two areas is in fact identical.

Hypotheses

So much is reasonably established. The excavated evidence cannot unfortunately take us much further with safety.

No very considerable artefactual evidence was recovered and little of this is diagnostic. However, what artefacts there are relate in the main to period 3, the period of the pa, and on the strength of the 2B adze found in a late posthole on top of the terraced hill, this period is probably to be assigned to Classic Maori.

What of period 2? The only evidence available here is that of the structures so abundantly represented in this period. Potentially, because of their variety, these structures are of great typological value, but at present there is no body of well-authenticated Archaic and Classic Maori structural data with which to compare them. Though precise and detailed parallels are lacking, there is an overall resemblance between the type of habitation represented by the Kauri Point pits of period 2 and that described by Mr. Parker for the Opito site, Mercury Bay, in the last Auckland issue of the Newsletter (Vol.3, no.2, March 1960). This general resemblance extends to sunken dwelling houses provided with scooped hearths and associated with other sunken rectangular structures with no hearths. The Opito site is, on all the available evidence, Archaic,

and I hazard the guess that period 2 (and period 1) at Kauri Point is Archaic also.

I realise the slimness of the argument for doing so, particularly in the light of the evidence for sunken dwellings at the time of European contact, reviewed by Mr. Fisher in this Newsletter. However, none of the other sites, with structures excavated in the Hauraki-Bay of Plenty area (pa at Mercury Island, Auckland and Paengaroa) has produced the type of structural evidence of Kauri Point and Opito.

This hypothesis of the Archaic status of period 2 at Kauri Point and the classic Maori status of the pa, fits and illuminates the known data fairly well. The change in tribal ownership of the site which this would imply would account for the observed break in sequence between periods 2 and 3. At European contact the dominant tribe was Ngaiterangi and the distribution of Ngaiterangi throughout the Tauranga Harbour area and of related tribes eastwards accords fairly well with that of the ring ditch pa as described in the introduction to this report.

Now, as Mr. Melvin points out on the authority of Wilson in his historical sketch, the irruptions of Ngaiterangi into the Tauranga Harbour area was late (18th century) and Katikati was near the limit of their expansion. Significantly it is the limit of the ring ditch pa as well. Here Ngaiterangi had to contend with Hauraki people pushing through the ranges to the coast, as well presumably as with the indigenous inhabitants. The number of ring ditch pa in the area could well be a mark of this uneasy frontier.

The indigenous tribe of the western Harbour area according to both Wilson and Mair, was Ngamarama. For Wilson Ngamarama belong to the Maui Maori, pre-fleet inhabitants of New Zealand. Mair put their headquarters at Bowentown. Bowentown, at the bottom end of Waihi Beach, is rich in material that shows it to be a southern extension of the Coromandel Archaic and the Archaic in Coromandel we suspect from our Sarah's Gully work persisted, as it certainly did in the Auckland area, to around 1700.(1). Ngamarama could well be therefore the name of an Archaic people.

By all the evidences Ngaiterangi must be culturally Classic Maori, and the ring ditch pa should be a criterion of Classic Maori in the Bay of Plenty area. The logic of the excavations at Kauri Point, where this type of pa is intrusive and late, is that the origins of Classic Maori in this area must be sought further east, whence the ringditch pa and the tribal groups plausibly associated with it were derived. The area of search could profitably hinge on Whakatane, where, as Mr. Pullar in this Newsletter shows, a valuable natural chronology of ash shower dated shorelines is available. It would extend to Maketu and towards Tauranga in the west and to Ohiwa and Opotiki in the east. Is it pure coincidence that precisely in this area most of the fullest canoe traditions are located?

One final point. If period 2 at Kauri Point is indeed Archaic, the terracing of hillslopes for habitation is seen to be a feature of Archaic

activity. And if terracing for habitation, why not also terracing for defence? As the writer in a previous article⁽³⁾ has tried to show the scarped and terraced pa is a distinct type in parts of the North Island, to be contrasted for example with the ring ditch type of the Bay of Plenty. As we have seen, there is a hint from excavations in the lateral trench at Kauri Point that terracing preceded the ditch and bank on the defended hill. This and the terracing on the terraced hill may relate to an earlier system of defence. Certainly no sure signs of such were discovered during the recent excavations, but little lateral extension of excavation of the type needed to find such signs was undertaken. This must be another major aim of future investigations at the site.

To attribute the practice of scarp and terrace defences to the Archaic, though running contrary to orthodox opinion, would certainly fit the facts of the Tamaki Isthmus pa much better than any other hypothesis. The Motutapu evidence suggests the persistence of the Archaic here into the second half of the 17th century, yet when the first Europeans came to Tamaki in the '20's of the 19th century not one of the many and complex terraced pa of the isthmus was inhabited. It would be unrealistic to cram the construction and habitation of Auckland's pa into little over a hundred years. And now, reported in this issue we have the radiocarbon date for Mt. Wellington, 1430A.D. \pm 40, admittedly a single estimation and admittedly only circumstantially connected with defended settlement. The implications are nevertheless strong that the Tamaki Isthmus pa are in part Archaic.

Here again traditions come legitimately to our aid. We may now use evidence from another quarter to the same effect. From Otauataua, one of the terraced pa of the Ihumatao volcanic field described in this issue, Mr. Alan Taylor has two adzes of undisputably Archaic type (1A and 4A in Duff's system) and Mr. E. Willis two more (1A). The present occupants of the isthmus, Ngati-Whatua of Kaipara, are newcomers: Cook might have seen their first Tamaki settlements had he not missed the Waitemata Harbour. The people whom they displaced and who are held responsible for most of the Tamaki pa are the Wai-o-hua, traditionally tangata whenua and pre-Fleet. To turn the wheel full circle, we might note that Wilson lists them as a people of his Maui nation at one time inhabiting part of the central Bay of Plenty between Tauranga and the Rangitaiki.⁽²⁾

References

1. The radiocarbon date on charcoal from an upper level at Sarah's Gully is reported by the laboratory as less than 200 years. This single estimation may be untrustworthy, but the date is archaeologically quite acceptable. The Auckland area date, again a single estimation, is from Motutapu and is 1678 A.D. \pm 40.
2. Wilson 1906. The Story of Te Waharoa, p.134.
3. Golson in Journal of the Polynesian Society, March 1957, Vol.66 no. 1, pp.75-78.