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## OTAKANINI PA, SOUTH KAIPARA

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After the Otakanini excavations were completed in 1968, a preliminary report was prepared and printed in the Newsletter, volume 12, number 1, pages 38-44 (1969). Since then the final report has been written and, hopefully, will be published by the Royal Society. During the Auckland Conference, Otakanini was visited as part of the South Kaipara field trip, and an abstract of the results of the excavation was prepared for this occasion. Because some of the conclusions drawn in the first preliminary report, especially those concerning Period I, require updating, this abstract follows here in full. It represents a statement of the final conclusions concerning Otakanini pa. The two figures referred to are not reproduced here, but are the same as the first two figures of my 1969 article. The carbon-14 dates were determined by the New Zealand Institute of Nuclear Sciences, Lower Hutt.

### OTAKANINI - SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

In the 18th century, Otakanini was one of the major strongholds of the Ngati Whatua tribe. Before describing the results of the excavations, we might briefly review the traditional evidence concerning the site.

1. Before c.1650-1700, the site was occupied by the Wai-o-hua tribe.
2. At approximately the above date, the pa was conquered by the Ngati Whatua, who at that time were moving south, and eventually occupied the Tamaki Isthmus by conquest (from Wai-o-hua) about 1750. Otakanini was occupied into the early 19th century, but most probably partially abandoned in favour of a pa on a nearby hill newly designed to withstand musket attacks.

The excavations, carried out in 1968 by L. M. Groube and P. S. Bellwood, were designed to illustrate the methods used to defend the pa, and changes in these methods over time. Figure 1 is a plan of Otakanini, showing the two defended areas, A and B. Excavations were concentrated along the line of the ditch and bank separating the two areas, and cover a total area of 300 square metres, in places to a depth of 2 metres. The area of the pa is 18,000 square metres, or nearly four acres.

Three periods of defence construction were revealed:

#### Period I

Areas A and B were not yet divided, and the western side of the pa was defended by a scarp 2 metres high, with a palisade on top. Within the pa was a number of rectangular storage pits, one having an attached bin pit. A C.14 determination for this period gives A.D. 1351  $\pm$  78. At this time, it appears that the pa consisted of one large area with no internal defences, although only a very small portion of the Period I defences have been located. No artefacts were associated with this period.

#### Period II

The defensive line dividing areas A and B was now constructed, and consisted of a scarp 2 metres high (without ditch). On top of the scarp was constructed a massive fighting stage, nine metres long by two metres wide, and 3-4 metres high. The posts of this stage were set up to two metres deep in the ground, and a party of about 25 men would be needed to pull one out by force, using a rope. In this period, area B either functioned as an annexe, or was abandoned.

#### Period III

The Period II stage was purposefully dismantled and the posts dug out of the ground. Figure 2 shows the Period III stage. For the first time, a ditch was added to the defences - the distance from ditch bottom to bank top being three metres. The palisade is straddled by two fighting stages, each 4-5 metres long and two metres wide. Entrance into the pa was along a narrow passage made by adding a subsidiary palisade parallel to the main one, and 90 centrimetres in front of it. This passage began halfway between the two stages, and could clearly be easily defended. The Period III palisades were rebuilt once along the same line, but there is no sign that the stages were ever rebuilt. Two dates refer to the construction of these defences - A.D. 1493  $\pm$  49 and 1561  $\pm$  48. 2B adzes, a stone onewa, and a dog-tooth fishhook were found associated with Period III.

The Otakanini fighting stages resemble those described by Cook and Banks for a pa in Mercury Bay. Cook describes these as follows:

"Close within<sup>(1)</sup> the inner Picketing was erected by strong posts a stage 30 feet high and 40 in length and 6 feet broad. The use of this stage was to stand upon to throw Darts at Assailants, and a number of Darts lay upon it for that purpose. At right angles to this Stage and a few paces from it was another of the Construction and bigness: this stood likewise within the Picketing, and was intended for the same use as the other - viz., to stand upon to throw stones and darts upon the Enemy as they advanc'd up the side of the hill where lay the Main way into the place ..... The main way leading into this fortification was up a very steep part of the Hill and thro' a narrow passage about 12 feet long and under one of the stages."

(Reed, 1969: 61-62)

The inhabitants of the pa subsisted on sweet potato, fern-root, fish, shell-fish, and the occasional dog. Shell-fish middens may still be observed all round the site. The dumps may have been purposefully spread to give the inhabitants warning of persons approaching the pa. From the economic evidence obtained, it is suggested that the pa was occupied all the year, but with a fluctuating population. Gardening, gathering or fishing groups would doubtless need to spend periods in residence elsewhere, but the pa is in a favourable ecological zone, and mandatory seasonal movement for all inhabitants is unlikely.

#### REFERENCES

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(1) Banks describes the stages as over the palisades - cf. Otakanini (Morrell, 1958: 76).