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NEW ZEALAND ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER



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PA IN TWO WESTERN SEGMENTS
OF THE WAIOTAHU AND WHAKATANE VALLEYS, BAY OF PLENTY

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The Waiotahi and Whakatane valleys contain some of the densest concentration of pa in New Zealand. Until recently little field study of these pa had been made, although brief site records have been entered by Ken Moore with some mapping of Waiotahi pa by David White. Important larger areas under forest development have been surveyed by Tawhio (1980) and Pierce (1982).

The Whakatane Valley pa recorded in this note are in an area subject to afforestation on the eastern flank of the Omataroa Block (Fig. 1). The Waiotahi pa are in an area adjacent to Tawhio's study area, and were recorded while surveying the lower enclosed part of the Waiotahi Valley down to Toone Road.

The long-term objective of these exercises is an account of pa distribution and inland settlement based on gardening of the alluvial flood plains in the eastern Bay of Plenty. Among other areas which need to be surveyed are the Waimana and Opouriao Plains and surrounding hills, and the Whakatane Gorge.

Soils on the hills are Whakatane hill soils, derived from pumice and the underlying greywacke. The flatland soils in the Omataroa study area are Matata soils, derived from colluvial ash; these are poorly drained in their natural state, and were originally covered in kahikatea, titoki, toetoe and flax (Pullar, 1972). The Waiotahi Valley alluvium has not been mapped, but above Toone Road parts of it are likely to have been well drained and suitable for horticulture. Below Toone Road the flats are old peat swamp, and poorly drained; following flooding, snapper have been found in dairying paddocks. In both areas a mixed podocarp/hard wood forest would have occupied gullies and hill slopes, with extensive areas of fern and regenerating scrub and hardwood forest along ridge tops.

Omataroa pa

These pa lie on lower parts of ridges leading into the main range west of the Whakatane Valley (Fig. 2); there are no pa further into the range to the west. The pa are not immediately adjacent to the main valley, but separated from it by the Waioho Stream flats and a series of low ridges. One pa lies on a low

hillock on the flats. None of the sites is noted on Best's (1927) map of pa in the eastern Bay of Plenty.

N78/365 (389131; A on Fig.2; Fig. 4). This pa is built on a high point in a ridge. It lies on two main segments slightly offset from one another. The upper segment is on two levels with *rua* dug into the bank between. The lower segment has terraces on its descending lower end, with some *rua* and thin scatter of midden. The upper segment is defended by massive ditches (up to 8 m high banks) with lateral ditches forming a 'ring' ditch. The south-eastern side has a terrace outside the ditch. The lower segment has steep natural defences on either side, with a ditch at the lower end. The upper and lower segments are each about 600 m² in area, a total of 1200 m². The pa has been in mature *tawa* and *rewarewa*, recently felled and burnt.

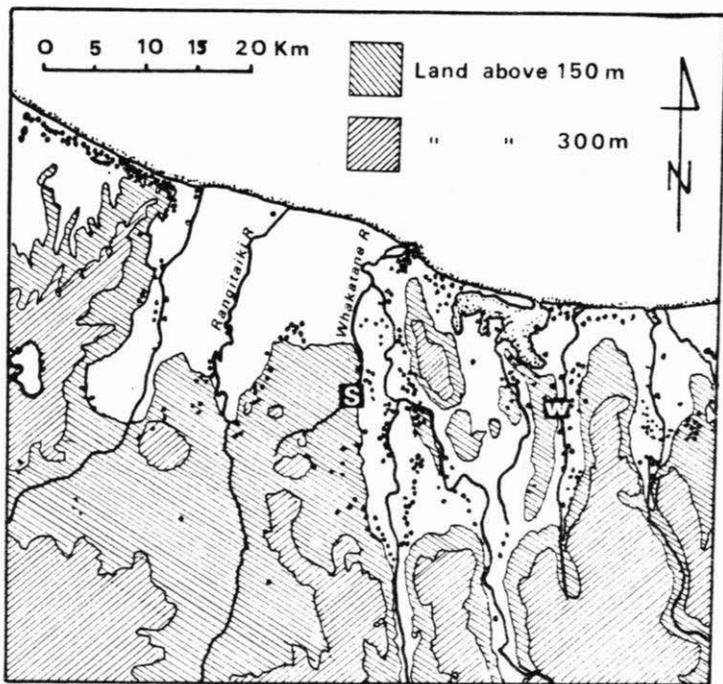


FIGURE 1. Location map showing Omataroa (S) and Waiotahi study areas. Dots show recorded sites, mainly pa.

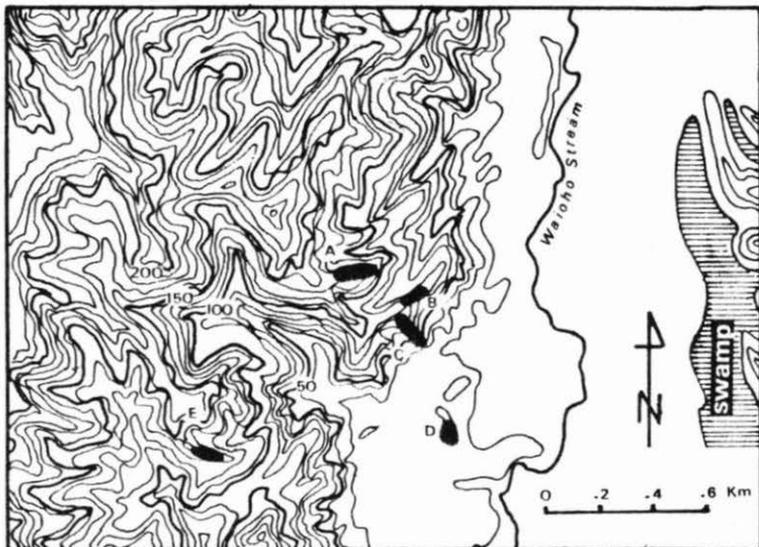


FIGURE 2.
Omataroa
study area.

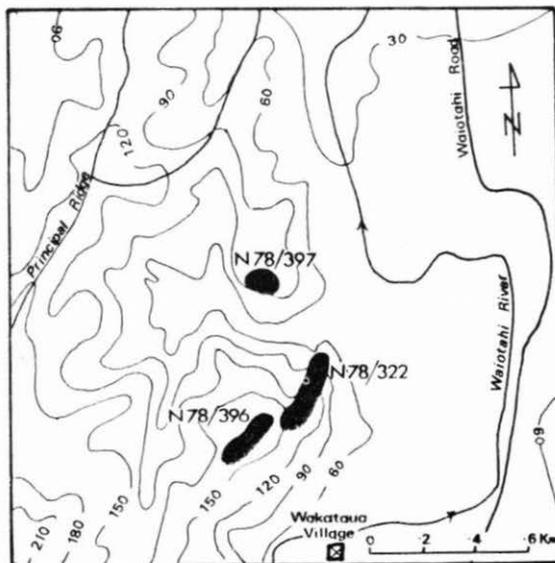


FIGURE 3.
Waiotahi
study area.

N78/366 (393132; B on Fig. 2; Fig. 4). This pa is on a near-level section of ridge lying below and to the south-east of N78/365. Kanuka scrub on the site had been felled but did not burn, and no surface features were detected. The pa lies in three segments: a large central one with, on either end, small exterior platforms. The main segment is defended by a steep slope to the north-west and ring ditch on the rest. The two external segments are defended by banks with a small ditch to the east. The defended area of the main platform is 600 m²; the total area of the two smaller platforms is about 200 m².

N78/395 (393129; C on Fig. 2; Fig. 4). This pa lies on a low ridge descending to the Waioho Stream flats. The upper of two segments lies on a minor high point in the ridge and is terraced. The lower segment consists of three descending terraces. The upper segment is defended by transverse ditches, with a raised bank at the west end; lateral ditches combine with the transverse to form a ring ditch. The lower segment also has transverse and lateral ditches except to the south-west, where it has slumped and the slope was naturally steep. The upper segment is about 550 m², and the lower 400 m².

N78/394 (393125; D on Fig. 2; Fig. 4). This pa lies on one of several adjacent hillocks in the Waioho Stream flats. The site is in grass and has been worn down by stock. The defended area is an upper platform circled to the west by a terrace. On the platform is a single infilled rectangular pit. The pa is defended by a ring ditch; the ridge to the east has a short second ditch outside the ring ditch. A continuation of the ridge of the hillock to the east has a single large terrace cut into it. Total defended area of the platform is about 800 m².

N78/367 (393125; E on Fig. 2; Fig. 4). This pa was sketched only. It lay in felled and burnt tawa and rewarewa. It is a single unit defended by transverse ditch and bank and near-continuous lateral ditch and bank. Ovenstones, rua and a terrace can be detected on the surface. No reliable estimate of the area of the platform can be made.

Waiotahi pa

These three pa occupy ridges or ridge tops near the 19th century village of Wakataua (Fig. 3). In this village Te Kooti Rikirangi spent his last years. On the river flats just to the north is the site of a battle, Uretaia, between Tuhoe and Whakatohea, ascribed to 1822 by Best (1927:348-349).

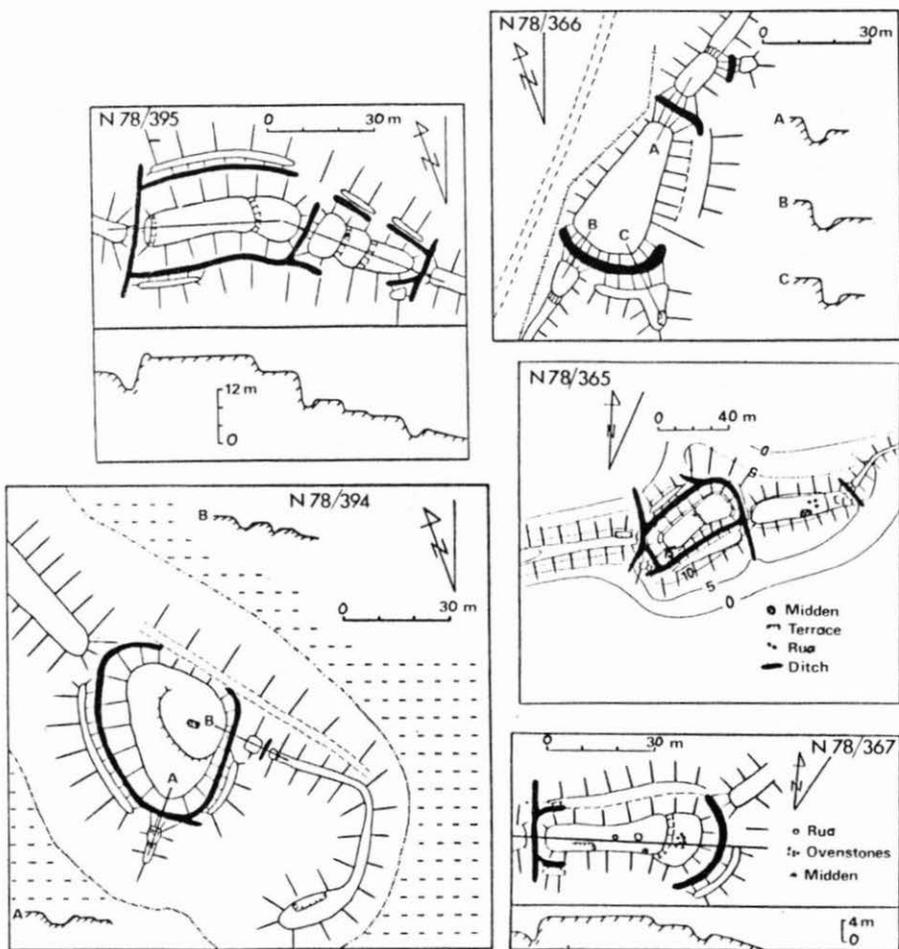


FIGURE 4. Pā of the Omataroa study area. N78/365 mapped by planimeter, other pā by tape and compass except N78/367 which was sketched. Profiles sketched.

N78/322 Orona (611106; Fig. 5). This site was built and occupied by Upoko-rehe, a hapu of the Whakatohea tribe, who also occupied Puhirake (N78/163) and Tokorangi (N78/823) on the opposite side of the valley (Best, 1927:89).

The pa occupies a high bending point in the ridge and commands a good view of the lower Waiotahi Valley. It is defended by transverse ditch and bank at either end, double at the northern end. There is some scarping on the platform; an unusual feature is a large, sunken rectangular feature, some 15 x 8 m in plan. At least 15 terraces have been cut into the ridge above and below the pa. Rectangular pits occur on some of these terraces. Total area of the defended platform is about 1300 m². The area of the undefended terraces cannot be accurately estimated but it would be at least equal to the area of the defended platform.

N78/397 Tuhua (609109; Fig. 5). This pa lies on a hill top opposite Orona and to its north; it is currently in massive pine trees, some of which have been felled. The pa was occupied by Upoko-rehe (Best, 1927:89). The platform has no obvious surface features and is defended by a ring ditch. Terraces lie outside the ditch to the north and west, with a flight of six terraces down the ridge leading to the Waiotahi Valley. Defended area of platform is about 350 m².

N78/396 (608104; Fig. 5). This lies on a high point on the ridge above Orona (N78/322). It is in three segments: two with transverse ditches and banks, the third to the north-east defended by natural slopes. The inner segment has an artificial scarp or infilled ditch to the south-east. Some raised rim rectangular pits occur on the north-east segment, otherwise there is no surface evidence on the platforms. The site lies in grass, kawakawa, and occasional rewarewa. The total artificially defended area is 1300 m²; the third segment is 1000 m².

Discussion

Among the recurring themes of New Zealand pa studies has been the idea that pa typology might reflect 'style', rather than functional elements related to the immediate topography or soil conditions (Groube, 1970; Prickett, 1982). Fox (1982:77) has suggested that chronological interpretations may also be made, based on fortification style, even for the prehistoric period.

Some weight might be given to this by noting the similarity of the Omataroa pa N78/365 and N78/395. Could these be the product of the same group, with an established building style?

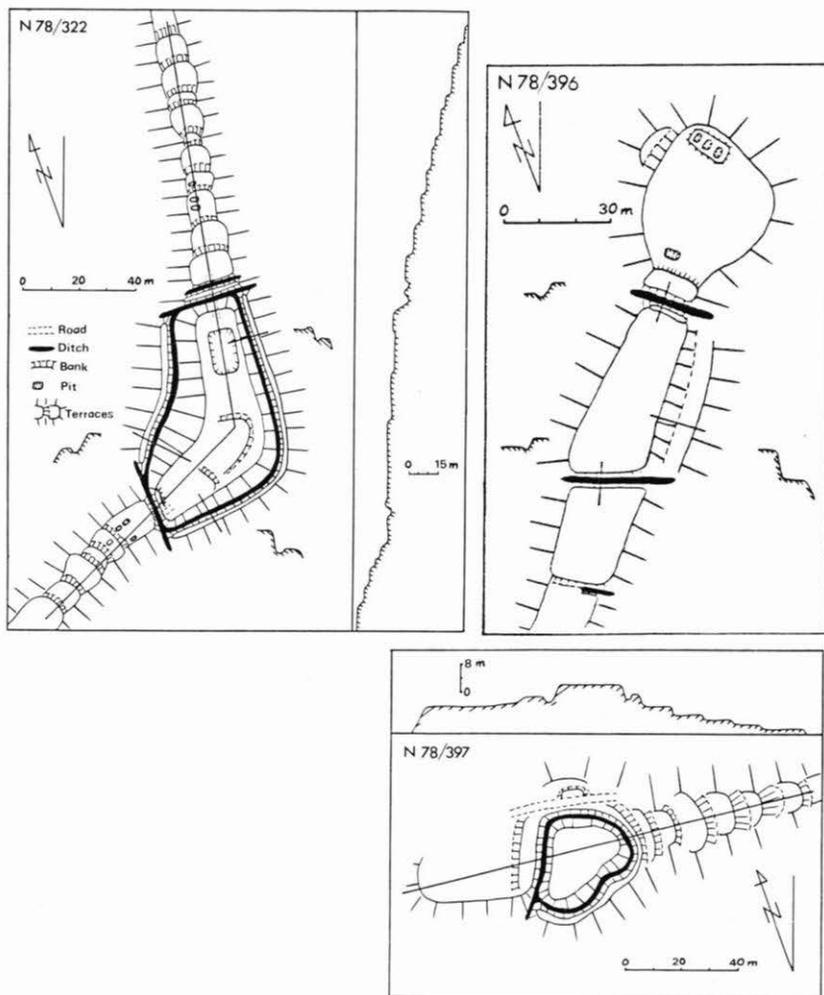


FIGURE 5. Pa of the Waiotahi study area, mapped by tape and compass. Profiles sketched.

Unfortunately, there is no traditional evidence which might confirm this. An obvious counter-example occurs in the Waiotahi pa, Tuhua and Orona. These two are quite different in style and yet were occupied by related groups. Chronology, definition of geographical range and the identity and size of the social entity (whether it be tribe, hapu or smaller unit) need to be considerably refined before a conclusion could be drawn.

On the other hand, immediate topography of these sites suggest that ring ditch (curved ditch around whole pa) fortifications tend to occur on hill tops, while the transverse ditch with conjoined lateral ditch are features of ridge pa. The predominant impression given by these pa is that the main influence on fortification form is the immediate topography.

Chronology

The pa are likely to have been occupied in the late prehistoric period. This is clearest for the two named Waiotahi fortifications. Pa elsewhere in the Waiotahi Valley have been ascribed to the 18th or early 19th centuries, from evidence of the position of Tarawera ash (1886) in the fill of ditches. Best's (1927) map usually distinguishes named pa and "old pa" and although not an especially sound distinction, it may be taken as a clue. The named pa will be derived from older informants living in the first decades of this century, and it seems unlikely they would date back more than several generations.

Most of the Omataroa pa have had a recent cover of mature tawa and rewarewa forest, estimated to be about 150-200 years old. Repeated firing of areas with abandoned pa before the 19th century can be assumed, so that these pa could date to the 18th century or earlier. However, the relatively good condition of surface features suggests fairly rapid covering of the sites by fern and forest, and these sites probably date to the 17th or 18th centuries.

The horticultural subsistence base of these pa deserves some consideration. Rua but not rectangular pits are evident in the Omataroa pa, and the adjacent flatland was not suitable for horticulture. Limited hill gardening is probable with gathering an important element of subsistence. Rectangular pits are present on the Waiotahi pa, where the river flats were probably in part suitable for horticulture.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Anne Leahy for field assistance in the mapping of N78/365 and David White for discussions of Waiotahi Valley pa.

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