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RADIOCARBON DATES FROM THE WAITAKERE RANGES, WEST AUCKLAND

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Over 550 prehistoric archaeological sites are recorded in the Waitakere Ranges and West Auckland (Hayward and Diamond, 1978). These cover a wide variety of site types including 53 pa, numerous pits, terraces, cave and rock shelters, cultivation sites and over 250 middens. Previously there had been no way of assessing the age of most of these sites and thereby linking them to the traditional history of the area. The only exceptions have been those sites, usually pa, specifically referred to in oral traditions and recorded in works such as Fenton (1879), Graham (1923, 1925), Kelly (1949), Smith (1897) and White (1888), and those few sites still in use when Europeans first arrived and mentioned in works such as Bethell (1968), Elder (1932), Drury (1854), D'Urville (1950) and Wade (1842).

Sites with occupations dated through mention in traditional histories or early European accounts are as follows:

1. Pa captured by Kawharu around 1700 AD - N41/3 (Muriwai); N41/20, 48 (Te Henga); N41/215 (Anawhata headwaters); N41/56 (Piha); N41/61 (Karekare); N41/41 (Whatipu).
2. Sacked by Ngapuhi in 1826 - N41/61, 244 (Karekare).
3. Built in 1820s for defence against Ngapuhi muskets - N41/122 (Te Henga).
4. Occupied in late 1830s, 1840s - N41/16, 18 (Te Henga); N41/26 (Anawhata); N41/36 (Piha); N42/389 (Cornwallis).

The majority of artefacts from the Waitakere Ranges are typical 2B adzes of the 'Classic Period', although several 'Archaic' adzes collected at Whatipu indicate at least some early occupation.

Brief traditional history

Traditional histories suggest that the first people to live in the Waitakeres were groups of refugees who fled into hiding in these rugged, bushed hills during the 14th and 15th centuries. These people are said to have dwelt in caves and rock shelters up the major valleys and along the west coast. As their numbers increased through the 15th and 16th centuries they moved out of their rocky hideouts and established settlements and cultivations in the open around the mouths of the various west coast stream valleys.

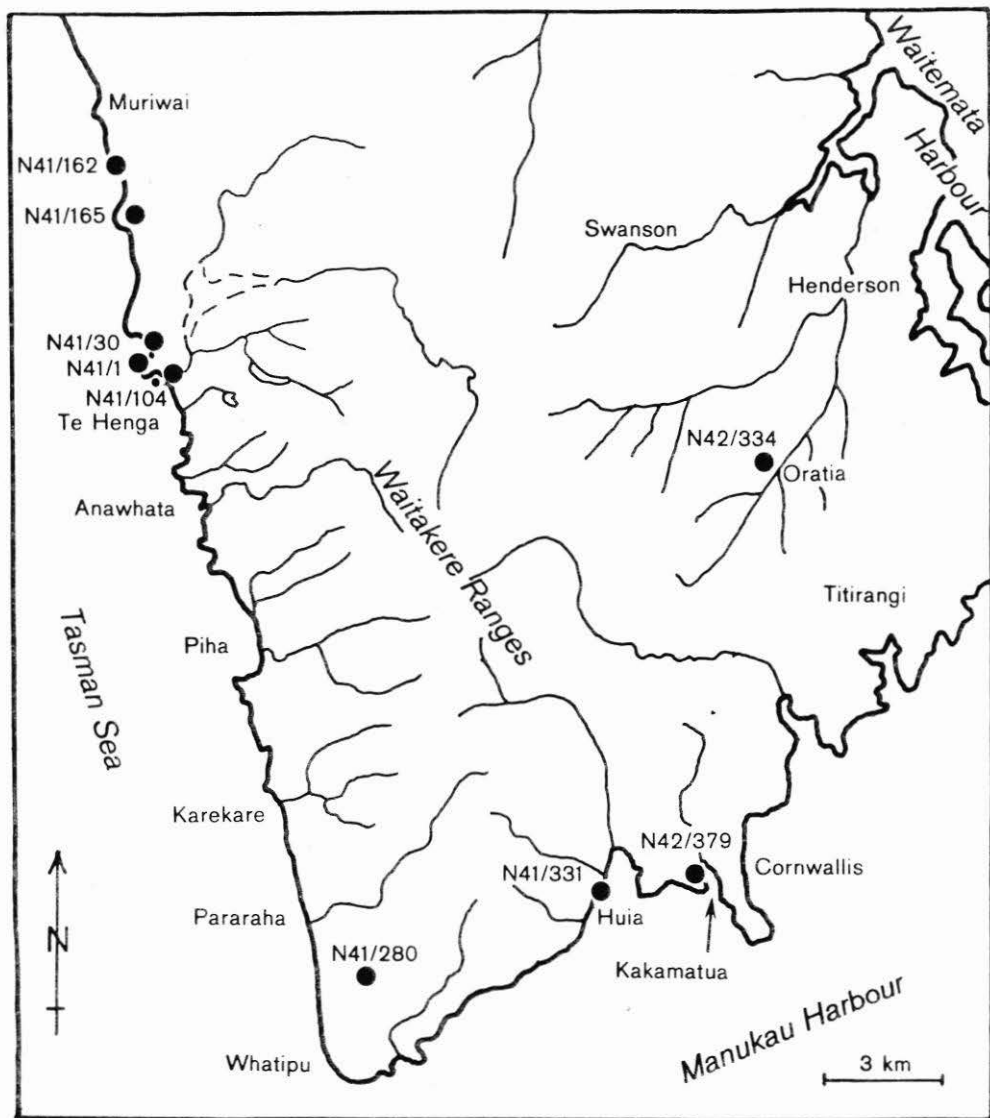


FIGURE 1. Prehistoric archaeological sites in the Waitakere Ranges from which radiocarbon samples have been taken.

Early in the 17th century, the Ngati Awa from the Kaipara, led by a famous chief called Maki, conquered their southern neighbours in the Waitakeres and together they formed the Kawerau tribe that occupied the Waitakeres and South Kaipara across to Cape Te Arai north of Cape Rodney throughout the 17th century.

Then about 1700, the Ngati Whatua of the North Kaipara became war-like and, led by a warrior called Kawharu, made two highly successful raids through Kawerau territory capturing all their pa in the South Kaipara and Waitakeres. By about 1730 the decimated Kawerau had all been driven out of the South Kaipara and into the Waitakeres by the Ngati Whatua who went on to take the Tamaki Isthmus from the Waiohua tribe during a decisive battle with Kiwi Tamaki around 1750.

When Europeans first arrived in New Zealand, the Ngati Whatua held land throughout the Kaipara and Tamaki Isthmus whereas the Kawerau occupied the Waitakeres and Cape Rodney area. During the early 19th century, the Ngapuhi from the Bay of Islands obtained European muskets and made several devastating raids into Ngati Whatua and Kawerau territories. The Kawerau, already greatly reduced in numbers by the influenza epidemics of 1790 and 1810, went into hiding in the dense Waitakere bush. The Ngati Whatua fled, leaving the Tamaki Isthmus deserted during the 1830s and some also hid out in the Waitakeres, before returning to Tamaki in the 1840s.

Radiocarbon samples

Samples were collected from nine prehistoric sites during January 1980 under N.Z. Historic Places Trust Permit No. 1979/30. From each site shells of a single species were submitted for dating - usually cockle (Chione stutchburyi) from harbour sites and toheroa (Paphies ventricosa), white rock shell (Thais orbita) or cat's eye (Turbo smaragdus) from west coast sites.

The sites were selected to supplement rather than test the ages of sites dated through reference in traditional histories. Thus the sites chosen were of particular design, or in specific areas not referred to in traditions. It was hoped the dates might test the overall synthesis of the traditional history that we have drawn together from many sources (Diamond and Hayward, 1979; Hayward and Diamond, 1978). The sites were (Fig. 1):

1. N41/1 Kauwahaia Island Pa, Te Henga. Sample from shell layer, 0.2m beneath soil; dates oldest visible evidence of use.
2. N41/30 Tangihau Headland Pa, Te Henga. Sample from sole shell lens visible on northern cliffs.

3. N41/104 Cave Shelter, Te Henga. Surface sample from rear of cave of Chione shells carried in from Manukau, Waitemata or Kaipara Harbours.
4. N41/162 Rock Shelter, south of Muriwai. From lowest part of 1m thick shell layer beneath floor. Samples of two species submitted as Xray examination indicated possible recrystallisation of shells.
5. N41/165 Tirikohua Headland Pa, south of Muriwai. Sample from shell layer beneath 0.2m soil on west side; older layer beneath.
6. N41/280 Rock Shelter, Taranaki Bay, Whatipu. Sample from base of 0.6m thick unstratified shell layer beneath floor.
7. N41/331 Midden, Hinges Bay, Huia. Sample from base of 1m thick unstratified shell midden.
8. N42/334 Midden, Oratia. Sample from base of 0.5m thick unstratified shell lens.
9. N42/379 Pits, Kakamatua. Sample from base of 0.6m thick shell pile on cliff below pits.

Site No.	Shell spp.	Lab No.	Years BP		Years AD
			Old $T\frac{1}{2}$	New $T\frac{1}{2}$	
N41/1	<u>Thais</u>	NZ4891	333 ± 47	343 ± 48	1607 ± 48
N41/30	<u>Thais</u>	NZ4892	274 ± 57	282 ± 59	1668 ± 59
N41/104	<u>Chione</u>	NZ4893	391 ± 35	403 ± 36	1547 ± 36
N41/162	<u>Thais</u>	NZ4894	< 250	< 250	-
	<u>Turbo</u>	NZ4895	< 250	< 250	-
N41/165	<u>P.ventricosa</u>	NZ4896	318 ± 34	327 ± 35	1623 ± 35
N41/280	<u>P.ventricosa</u>	NZ4897	340 ± 34	350 ± 35	1600 ± 35
N41/331	<u>Chione</u>	NZ4898	419 ± 34	431 ± 36	1519 ± 36
N42/334	<u>Chione</u>	NZ4888	368 ± 34	379 ± 35	1571 ± 35
N42/379	<u>Chione</u>	NZ4889	335 ± 58	345 ± 59	1605 ± 59

TABLE 1. Radiocarbon dates for nine shell samples from the Waitakere Ranges and West Auckland. Supplied by the NZ Radiocarbon Dating Laboratory, DSIR, Lower Hutt.

Discussion

The two samples from N41/162 could not be accurately dated, confirming the probable recrystallisation of the shells. The other eight samples all gave dates centred around the 16th and 17th centuries, from which it might be inferred that this was the period when the population of the Waitakeres first became substantial and may also have been the time of peak population numbers in the area. This inference is compatible with the traditional history where a trend of increasing population through to about the time of Maki in the early 17th century is apparent,

followed by a decline in numbers caused by the Ngati Whatua conquests and later by the influenza epidemics and Ngapuhi raid. It would be logical to conclude therefore that many of the prehistoric sites in the Waitakere Ranges were first occupied during the 16th and 17th centuries.

The large Tirikohua Pa (N41/165) for example (not mentioned in traditional histories) was occupied around the early 17th century and possibly built in the 16th. Similarly two other nearby pa (Kauwahaiia and Tangihau, N41/1, 30) also have occupations dated as late 16th - 17th century and were probably built not significantly earlier. Also the surface sample of shells from the Te Henga cave shelter (N41/104) gave a 16th century date - considerably older than was expected.

In the south-western Waitakeres there are numerous rock shelters with associated shell midden along the coastal cliffs between Pararaha and Whatipu, none of which are mentioned in traditions. The site (N41/280) selected for dating gave a late 15th - early 16th century age, slightly earlier than most of the events of which there are detailed traditional accounts.

Traditional history and early European accounts all refer to the Manukau Harbour coastline in the southern Waitakeres as an area visited by seasonal shark fishing parties from the Waikato, Awhitu or Tamaki. There is no mention of the area being permanently settled and cultivated, yet in our archaeological survey we found several pa and clusters of pits, suggesting a period of settlement and cultivation. Tradition indicates that this area was the tribal boundary from the 17th century onwards, between the Kawerau and Waiohua, and later the Ngati Whatua. We suggested that the period of settlement possibly predated its being a boundary zone and could have been around 1500 AD (Diamond and Hayward, 1979). The two sites selected for dating in this area - a large midden (N41/331) and pits with midden (N42/379) - gave ages around the early 16th and 17th centuries respectively, and seem to support our hypothesis.

There is no mention in traditional or European histories, of any Maori occupation of the eastern Waitakere foothills, apart from the existence of a Maori track through the area. A hill top pa and several pit clusters are present in the Oratia - Henderson area however. A large shell midden (N42/334) close to a cluster of terraces and 15 pits (N41/65) on the banks of the Oratia Stream gave a date around the late 16th century which is quite likely applicable to all these sites.

Acknowledgements

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