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NEW ZEALAND ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER



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SOME PETROGLYPH SITES IN THE NORTH ISLAND, IV

This is the fourth in a short series of notes on some recently surveyed sites.

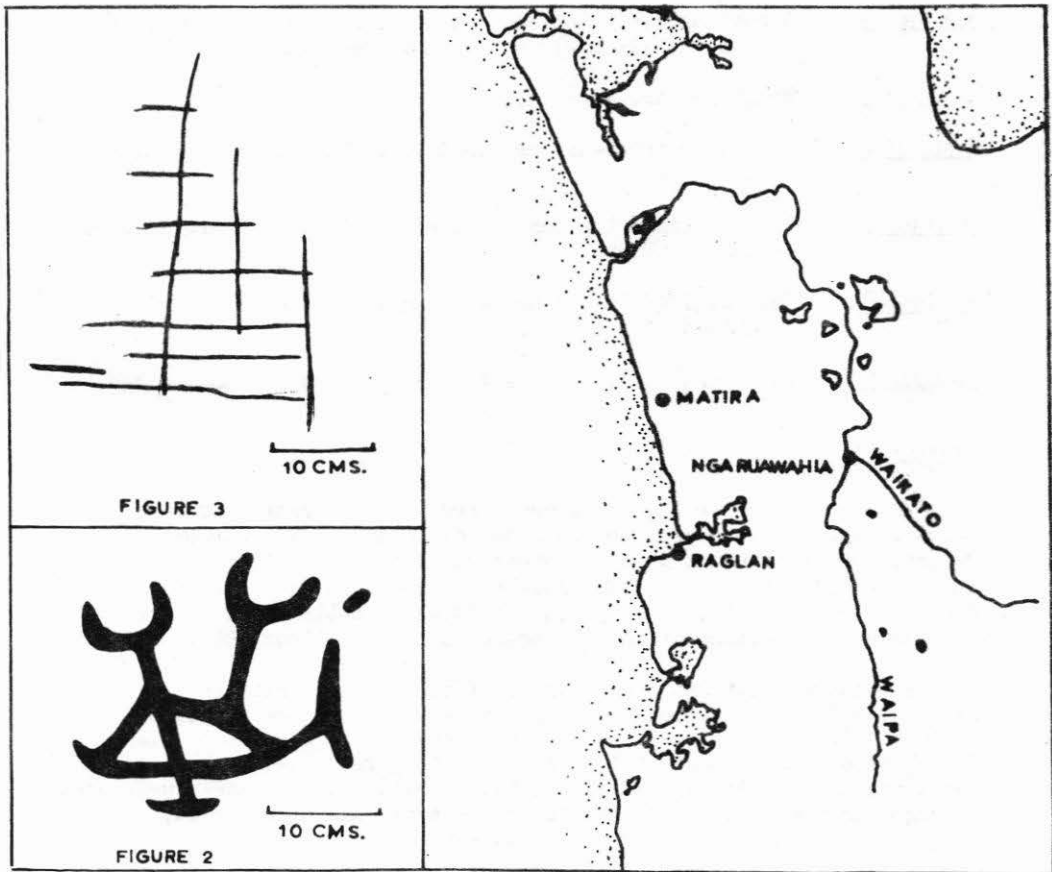
MATIRA, SOUTH AUCKLAND

R. Garry Law

This site was first filed by Mr H. G. Pos while he was resident in the Waikato. It is filed on the Waikato District file as N55/1. Until recently the site consisted of some carved boulders, on the north side of the Matira Extension Road west of Ngaruawahia. The boulders originated by weathering from an outcrop of Pleistocene basalt which occurs in the area. The boulders with glyphs were removed to the Turangawaewae Marae at Ngaruawahia early in 1969 at the request of the owner of the land, Mr Tennent. Growth of moss on the boulders following the clearing of scrub had increased the rate of weathering noticeably and prompted Mr Tennent's request. A search by the author failed to reveal any further carved boulders in the vicinity of the site. The following records were made on a visit to the marae at Ngaruawahia at the invitation of the Marae Committee, to whom I extend my thanks. Unfortunately, the boulders had been damaged by thoughtless handling since they were removed from the site. One exhibited wire strop marks, nearly all have had spalls removed, one is broken into several pieces, moss has been removed with a wire brush removing the rock surface in which the shallow glyphs are incised, and some initials have been carved on the boulders in their present position in a flower bed beside a path. Consequently, some of the features which the farmer described on the rocks can no longer be seen. It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that the boulders would have been better left in their original position.

THE CARVINGS

The Tennents only knew of one carved boulder which they described as carved with a canoe, zig-zags, squares, spirals and tattooing marks. This is probably Stone Three, although the canoe and the squares are no longer visible. When the boulders were removed, eight more boulders were also removed but glyphs can be seen on only seven of these now. The boulders are numbered in the order they are set out in at the moment.



r.g.l.

- Boulder 1 Some vague markings occur on this boulder apart from the pecked design on Figure 2 and some squaring.
- Boulder 2 No glyphs are apparent.
- Boulder 3 On one side of this boulder some vague incisions and a zig-zag occur, while on the other three separate pieces of scroll work occur. Two of these are shown on Figure 1.
- Boulder 4 A rectangularly incised pattern resembling a ladder is carved on this boulder and shown on Figure 3.
- Boulder 5 No glyphs are apparent.
- Boulder 6 A regular cross-hatched incised design occurs on this boulder.
- Boulder 7 Three designs the same as those on boulder 6 are incised on this boulder.
- Boulder 8 This boulder is the broken example. Another cross-hatched design occurs.
- Boulder 9 This large columnar shaft has two vague glyphs incised.

DISCUSSION

While no trace of the canoe mentioned by the farmer survives, it seems reasonable to accept that a canoe did occur. The farmer's description is accurate in every other way and in addition some stylistic elements which occur elsewhere associated with canoes occur. These are the zig-zags and the squared patterns which are associated with canoes at the Kaiangaroa shelter (Wilson 1962).

The spiral patterns are reminiscent of tattooing patterns, especially Figure 1A which can be recognised as the nose and cheek tattoo on the right side of a face, from the wearer's point of view. Some tattoo marks appear at the closest petroglyph site to the site in question, that at Raglan (Phillipps 1962: 400). Tattoo marks were used as signatures by illiterate Maoris in the early historic period; a well-known example is the Treaty of Waitangi.

Figure 2 is particularly interesting as stylistically it could be lost in a collection of South Island rock art. The apparent diversity occurring at this site makes its treatment even more tragic.

REFERENCES

- Phillipps, W. J. 1962 Incised Rocks. Raglan J.P.S., Vol. 71, No. 3, p. 400.
- Wilson, M. G. 1962 In Search of the Great Fleet. Whakatane and District Historical Society Memoir No. 2.

