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THE DATE OF FIRST SETTLEMENT OF NEW ZEALAND: A SECOND OPINION POLL

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Discussion at the New Zealand Archaeological Association Conference in Auckland in 1988 focused on the date of first settlement of New Zealand. In order to establish if there was a consensus on this contentious subject, an informal poll was organised. The results were reported back to the Conference and were later published in *Archaeology In New Zealand* 31 (2):77-79, 1988. The poll showed that the two periods endorsed by the orthodox theory, the 9th century and the 11th century, both had strong support. About 80% of participants selected dates between 700 and 1100 A.D.

At the Whangarei Conference this year (1994), a second poll was taken to see if there had been a shift in views since 1988. Unlike the Auckland Conference, there was no formal discussion of the date of first settlement at the Whangarei Conference. People attending a session on the second day of the Conference were asked to write their preferred calendar year on paper supplied by the organiser. There were 49 responses in all. Of these, one is disqualified for answering in terms of generations and a second, suggesting a date of one million years B.C., is not included in the analysis.

The Whangarei Conference was smaller than the Auckland one and there were, accordingly, fewer responses. The class interval for Fig. 1 is, therefore, set at 100 years, rather than the 50 year class interval used in 1988. For the purposes of comparison, the 1988 data are reworked with a 100 year class interval and a 500 B.C. date is discarded. Both sets of figures are presented as percentages. Some statistics characterising the two polls are shown in Table 1.

The 1994 poll suggests that there have been some significant shifts in opinion over the last six years. There is still good support for the two periods of the orthodox theory, but these have been eclipsed by the strong support for shorter chronologies. Twelfth Century dates grew from 5% support in 1988 to 28% in 1994 and 13th Century dates grew from nil support in 1988 to 11% support in 1994. The support for long chronologies which was evident in a small way in 1988 has declined markedly. Whereas earlier some 16% supported a date before 700 A.D., only 6% do so now.

The twelfth century now has some claim to be considered the orthodox date of first settlement of New Zealand.

TABLE 1: Statistical characterisation of the two polls

	1988	1994
Mean:	860 A.D.	1103 A.D.
Standard Deviation:	210	177
Standard Error of the Mean:	23	26
Median:	800 A.D.	1000 A.D.
Mode:	800-899 A.D.	1100-1199 A.D.

Opinions on the date of first settlement of New Zealand 1988 and 1994

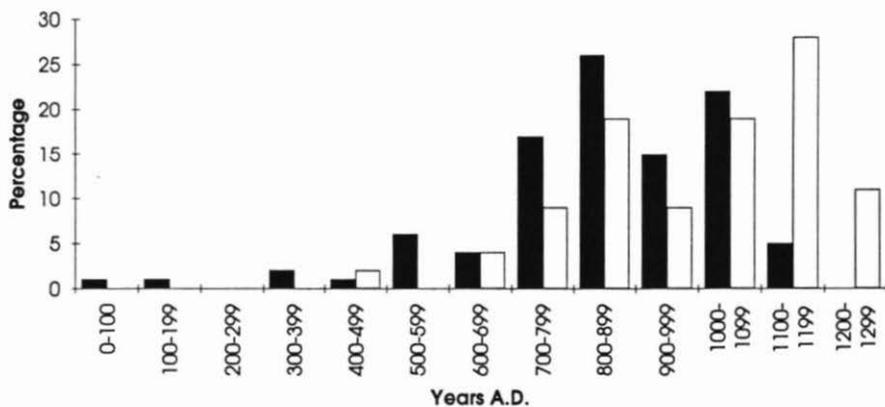


Figure 1. Opinions on the date of first settlement. Solid bars represent 1988 (n = 82) and open bars represent 1994 (n = 47).