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THE FIRST THOUSAND YEARS

Regional Perspectives in New Zealand Archaeology

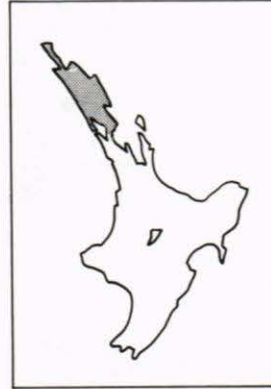
Edited by Nigel Prickett



NORTHLAND

Janet Davidson

Northland is a long, narrow peninsula, the 'inland' regions of which are nowhere more than 30 km from the coast (Fig. 1.1). In contrast to much of the rest of New Zealand, it is oriented north-west/south-east and is a relatively stable land mass with little recorded seismic activity. The landscape is largely composed of rolling hill country, with some steeper hills, occasionally reaching heights of 770 m above sea level. There are narrow river valleys and limited areas of flat land. The east coast is deeply indented and has many small offshore islands. The west coast is characterised by long sandy ocean beaches and a few harbours. Extensive sand dune development, often accompanied by encroachment of sand inland, is a marked feature of some parts of the west coast. Northland as a whole is well endowed with harbours, created by the drowning of former river valleys. Several of the harbours have extensive sand bars at their mouths.¹



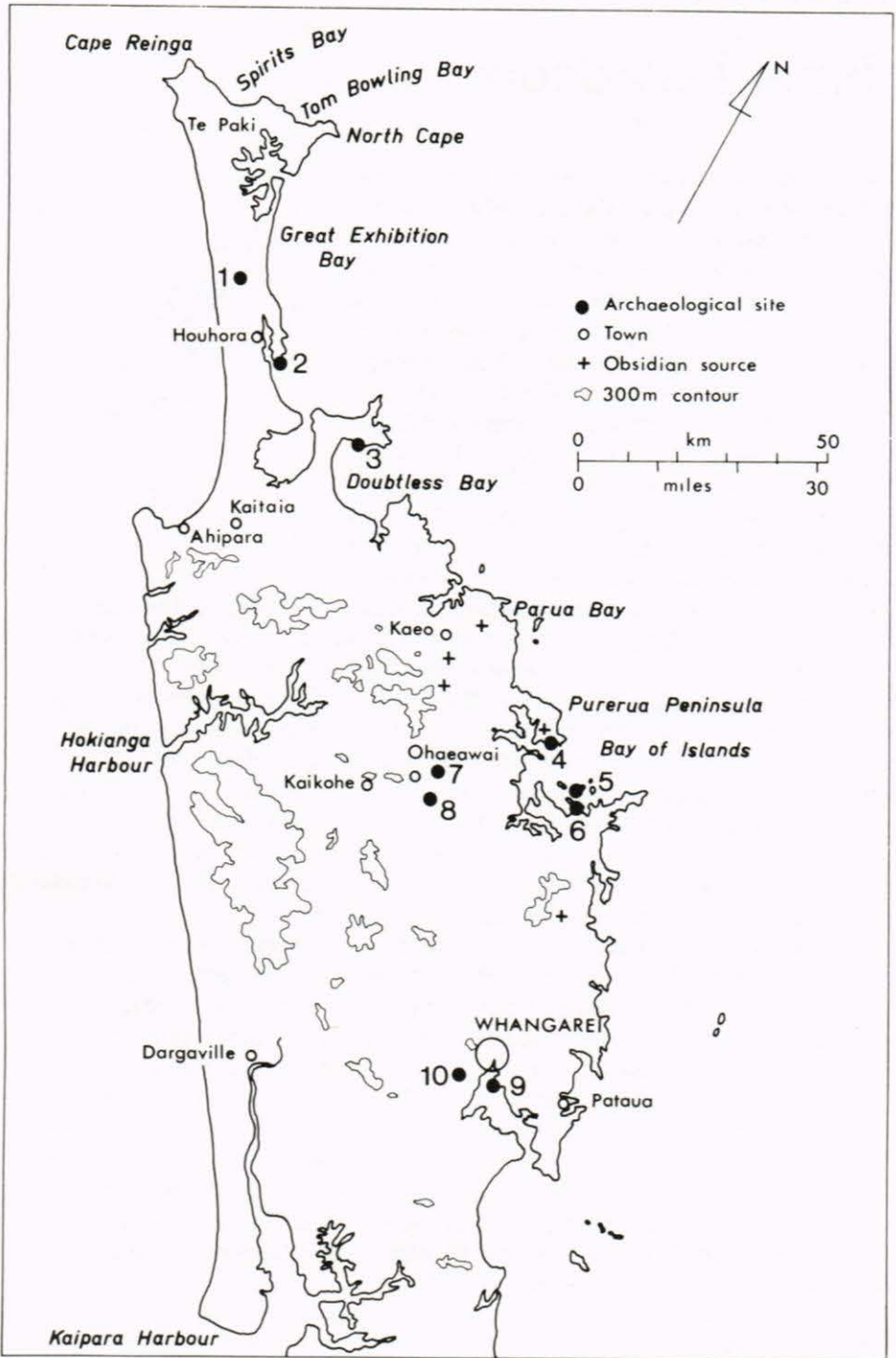
The oldest geological formations in Northland are sedimentary rocks, thought to be of Permian age. The modern landscape is composed of a mosaic of sedimentary and volcanic formations varying in age from Mesozoic to Quaternary. Quaternary volcanism is represented by a number of small volcanic cones in several areas, most notably around Ohaeawai, inland from the Bay of Islands.² The major soils reflect the underlying geology and include granular brown clays and red-brown loams developed on volcanic rocks and ashes, and yellow brown earths and podzols developed on the sedimentary rocks.³

Northland enjoys a pleasant, sub-tropical climate, with warm humid summers and mild winters. The prevailing wind is from the south-west, but there are occasional gales and heavy rains from the east or north-east. Favourable parts of the coast are frost-free in most years. Rainfall is highest in the central part of the peninsula and somewhat lower north of Kaitaia and south of Whangarei.⁴

The peninsula contained a large proportion of New Zealand's kauri forest in recent times, although usually the kauri was intermixed in diverse associations of podocarps and hardwoods.⁵ Much of the region was still forested in the early nineteenth century. However, significant areas, including much of the immediate coastline, had been cleared in prehistoric times. There were large areas of fern and scrub in the far north, around and inland from the Bay of Islands, near Whangarei (particularly the coast immediately to the south), on the western shores of the Kaipara Harbour, and south towards Auckland.⁶ These areas correspond with some of the most dense evidence of prehistoric settlement.

Northland was well endowed with resources to attract prehistoric Polynesian settlers. The east coast waters and all the major harbours provided an abundant and accessible supply of marine foods. Fishing was highly developed (almost to the point of specialisation) in the Bay of Islands at the time of initial European contact.⁷ Successful fishing is documented both archaeologically and ethnographically for other parts of the region also.⁸

**Prehistoric
resources**



1.1 The Northland peninsula. Archaeological sites mentioned in the text are: 1. Taumatawhana; 2. Mt Camel; 3. Whatuwhiwhi; 4. Rangihoua; 5. Paeroa Pa and Moturua Gardens; 6. Te Kuri's Village; 7. Poor Hill; 8. Pouerua; 9. Northland Harbour Board; 10. Ruarangi.

Although some of the northern soils are very infertile, notably the 'gumlands' developed under the kauri forests, there are also areas of good, fertile soils. Extensive remains of prehistoric fields in the inland Bay of Islands area suggest a considerable investment in prehistoric horticulture, as do other aspects of the archaeological record in parts of Northland, further discussed below. Northland was also an area which produced the edible rhizome of the bracken fern in considerable abundance.⁹

The distribution of birds, including extinct species, during the prehistoric period is little studied, but appears to have been patchy. Certainly in the far north, the earliest settlers found as great an abundance of moa and other species as was available elsewhere in the country, and other enclaves appear to have existed around Whangarei, and in places on the west coast. However, the absence of sites containing bird bones, and particularly moas, on much of the east coast has led some archaeologists to speak of an 'Archaic gap' (between the rich and well documented Archaic sites of the Coromandel-Barrier region, and the less known but probably once equally numerous sites of the far north).¹⁰ This highlights one of the problems of Northland prehistory — the extent to which it can be considered a single homogeneous region in any sense.

Several kinds of stone resources useful to prehistoric Polynesians are found in Northland. Four sources of obsidian have been described, three ((Pungaere, Waiare and Weta) in the Kaeo area and one at Huruiki, north of Whangarei).¹¹ Although the extent of prehistoric distribution of material from the Kaeo sources is not known, Huruiki obsidian was reaching the southern tip of the North Island by the fourteenth century and the extreme south of the South Island at an unknown but probably later date.¹² Good flake quality chert is found at a number of places,¹³ although so far only local exploitation of this material is documented.¹⁴ A gabbro was widely used for adzes throughout the region; its exact source is not yet known.¹⁵ Other possible rock resources include some of the greywackes which occur widely in the eastern parts of Northland, and the serpentine and other ultramafic rocks of North Cape.

Archaeological background

Northland has been greatly neglected by archaeologists, despite its obvious potential for research and probable importance in the overall study of New Zealand prehistory. The lack of research, however, has not precluded speculation about its prehistory, nor its use in various theories about New Zealand prehistory in general. It has been seen both as a 'marginal area' and as the focus within which Classic Maori culture, or important aspects thereof, developed. Skinner, in his pioneering study of regional diversity in New Zealand, defined a Northern Culture Area (extending as far south as the Auckland isthmus) which was characterised by extensive cultivation and the densest population in the country, as well as by various artefact forms.¹⁶ Duff, on the other hand, noting the concentrations of artefacts which he regarded as typically moa-hunter in the collections from the far north, suggested that the area was marginal to the homeland of Classic Maori culture, which he saw in the Auckland-Waikato area.¹⁷ Both Golson and Green largely ignored Northland,¹⁸ recognising the lack of modern archaeological data, although Golson early pointed out the particular potential of the north for studies of the protohistoric period¹⁹ — a fascinating topic outside the scope of this book. Most recently, both Groube and Simmons, studying the distribution of types of fortifications and stone adzes, and comparing these with traditions about important tribal ancestors, have postulated the development and spread of Classic Maori culture from the north to other parts of the North Island.²⁰

It will already be apparent that succinct overall summaries of New Zealand prehistory have no place in this book, which is concerned with the numerous variations of Polynesian settlement and adaptation throughout New Zealand. Theories

and speculations about Northland have been briefly reviewed above, because they provide the background against which previous archaeological work took place. It must be said, however, that the existing archaeological evidence for Northland prehistory is so scanty that it so far provides only a few fragments of a picture of the prehistory of a region, and is even more woefully inadequate for assessing the role of that region in any wider studies of New Zealand prehistory.

Site surveys

In recent years, although excavation has been neglected, the north has seen an unprecedented amount of intensive recording of archaeological remains, making it one of the most thoroughly recorded parts of the country.²¹ Even so, many important coastal areas have not been intensively surveyed, and records depend on sporadic reports by interested people in their spare time during the past twenty years.

One of the most striking results of the intensive surveying programmes has been the variation in the range and concentration of archaeological sites from area to area in Northland.²² Some regions are extremely rich in archaeological evidence, others have few or no archaeological sites. Soils, vegetation, and access to other resources seem to have been important in influencing the choice of settlement location. Even those coastal areas that have numerous archaeological sites display marked differences in the proportions of various kinds of sites from one region to another. These differences have yet to be fully analysed and interpreted, and can perhaps best be indicated by some specific examples.

In the extreme north (Cape Reinga to North Cape), about 1,000 archaeological sites have been recorded in an area of approximately 28,000 hectares.²³ Just over 10 percent are fortified sites or pa, a density of approximately one per square mile. For every pa, however, there are some nine other sites recorded, the great majority of which are unfortified living sites, often combinations of house terraces and food storage pits. Seriously under-recorded in this area are the very numerous remains of former living sites in the extensive shifting sand dunes, which are often very badly eroded. If these could be precisely enumerated the total number of sites would increase considerably, and the proportion of fortified sites in the total would drop further. This area is distinguished by a large number of rectangular pits, thought to be kumara storage pits, in contrast to some parts of the north. With one or two notable exceptions, the pa are not as large as those in some other areas of Northland; some of the most impressive probably belong, in their present form at least, to the protohistoric period. Rectangular ditch and bank pa are numerous, and sometimes a fortified site may consist of as many as six adjacent rectangular units. Another form of pa found in this survey area, as well as elsewhere in the far north, is a double citadel or twin tihi pa, in which two separately enclosed peaks are surrounded by one or more concentric outer defences. Terraced and irregular forms of fortification, and a number of headland pa, are also found in this region. The high density of archaeological sites is paralleled by a large number of artefact finds from the sand dunes over the years. Many items of definitely Archaic type have been found, particularly adzes and fishhooks, but there is also a high representation of adzes and ornaments in South Island greenstone. These finds suggest that the area was wealthy and well populated for a long period, with well established contacts as far afield as the South Island.

The long, low-lying area joining the North Cape region to the rest of Northland presents a marked contrast. It is characterised by a large number of midden sites, mostly badly eroded, in the sand dunes. There are only a few pa and other sites, except at Mount Camel, where a small pa cluster is found.

Several surveys in the Bay of Islands have revealed considerable diversity even within this small part of the larger Northland region. The islands in the south-east part of the bay have a relatively large number of pa — almost 30 percent of all

sites recorded. The majority are headland pa, such as those seen in use by 18th century explorers. Another very characteristic site is a knoll terraced for occupation but with no definite surface evidence of fortification.²⁴ On the adjacent mainland and down the east coast, pa comprise 21 percent of recorded sites and vary in size and complexity from one part of the coast to another.²⁵ In the Purerua Peninsula to the north of the bay on the other hand, pa make up fewer than 9 percent of all sites, and the majority of sites in all categories are small, compact, and visually unimpressive.²⁶ One exception is the particularly important protohistoric site, Rangihoua Pa (N11/58), near the Marsden Cross Reserve, which was occupied during the early 19th century (Figs 1.2 and 1.3).



1.2 and 1.3

Rangihoua, near the Marsden Cross Reserve in the Bay of Islands. 1.2 (upper) shows the occupied pa as it was depicted by Earle in 1827. 1.3 (lower) shows the site today (A. Leahy).



Further north on the east coast, at Parua Bay, the proportion of pa to other sites is comparable to that in the south-east Bay of Islands. Six prominent pa dominate an archaeological landscape in which terraced open settlements, small pit groups, and recognisable garden areas are more insignificant.²⁷ The pits throughout this east coast region are generally fewer and smaller than those in the far north and parts of the west coast, although large complexes of pits, including very large ones, are found around Whangarei.

Vastly different again is the archaeological landscape of the inland Bay of Islands. This is characterised by extensive terracing of volcanic hills (the most impressive of which is probably Pouerua N15/5 near Pakaraka Junction; see Fig. 1.4), and large areas of garden systems and living sites on the fertile volcanic soils surrounding these hills. This is a landscape very similar to that found in parts of the Auckland isthmus, described in another chapter in this volume. It is much less studied and less well known, although better preserved, than the Auckland example.



1.4 Pouerua, one of the spectacular terraced volcanic hills of the inland Bay of Islands district. The crater rim was once fortified. Gardens and small settlements extended over a large area at the base of the hill (C. Phillips).

Finally, a survey of the very large area between Ahipara and North Hokianga revealed four main clusters of settlement which tend to concentrate around harbours and river valleys and some coastal areas. The northern side of the Hokianga Harbour and some river valleys, however, show little sign of intensive prehistoric settlement. Throughout the area pa represent 34 percent of all sites, but in the region south and east of Kaitiāia this figure rises to 46 percent. Different kinds of pa predominate in different parts of the survey area. Pits are numerous and well defined.²⁸

The areas mentioned above comprise only a selection of those covered by site surveys and include some of the more important areas studied. Some surveys in inland areas, although not very far from the coast, have revealed few or no prehistoric sites.

A number of points arise from these surveys. Settlement is found in the coastal regions, around harbours and river valleys, and in particularly favourable inland areas, notably those with fertile volcanic soils and volcanic hills suitable for

occupation and defence. Even around the coast, however, there is considerable variation in the density of surviving evidence of prehistoric settlement, in the proportions of fortified and unfortified sites, and in the size and design of fortified sites. This variety is bound to reflect a number of factors, including density and duration of occupation, topographical suitability, potential for horticulture, tribal variation, and differential destruction of sites in recent times. Although gross differences can be relatively easily identified, the working out of detailed regional variation and its reasons will require excavation and sophisticated analysis. Nonetheless, the richness and variety of the prehistoric landscape in the north is apparent. Parts of Northland were densely settled and wealthy in the 18th century; some parts seem to have been densely settled and wealthy for most if not all of the prehistoric period. The evidence is still to be seen in the rich archaeological landscapes, some of which, at least, are likely to be preserved in public ownership in areas such as the Te Pahi Farm Park and the Bay of Islands Maritime and Historic Park.

There have been few archaeological excavations either in the past or in modern times. Apart from sporadic reports of moa bones from coastal sites in the 19th century,²⁹ no controlled archaeological excavations took place until the 1960s. However, curio hunting, particularly on the sand dunes of the far north, has gone on for at least a century, and has contributed to the destruction of an unknown but large number of sites, and the loss of untold amounts of scientific information. Controlled modern excavations have been few and largely unrelated to each other, although they centre in three areas — the far north, the Bay of Islands, and Whangarei. Most were undertaken at least partly in response to a threat of imminent damage or destruction of a site. There is a great need for a coordinated programme of research in one part of Northland.

Excavations



- 1.5 A distant view of the excavation of an early hunting and fishing camp at the foot of Mt Camel, by the entrance of Houhora Harbour. The site probably extended over much of the flat area, but has been extensively damaged by shingle extraction (Anthropology Department, University of Auckland).

One aspect of early Polynesian settlement of the north is represented by the Mount Camel site (N6/4) near Houhora (Fig. 1.5) from which items of material culture and midden remains have been analysed in some detail.³⁰ The site is situated on a low coastal platform at the mouth of the Houhora Harbour and at the foot of Mount Camel, and is estimated to have covered about 1.5 ha before partial destruction by quarrying. In the excavated part — less than 2 percent of the estimated total site area — was found a series of up to twelve thin occupation layers, separated by thin layers of sterile sand. There are two radiocarbon dates for the main occupation of A.D. 1154 ± 56 and A.D. 1260 ± 44.

A major activity in the excavated part of the site was the manufacture and repair of one-piece bait hooks of moa bone. Their use is reflected in the large number of fish bones found. Trolling lures were also used. Several flat-sectioned shell lure shanks with dorso-ventral perforation for line attachment are similar to Coromandel specimens, including a pearl shell example from Tairua. Both uniperforate and biperforate lure points were found. Harpoon heads are reported in surface collections from the site but were not found in the excavations.

Adzes from Mount Camel fall far short of South Island Archaic specimens both in size and quality of manufacture. One fragment is recognisably of quadrangular section with slightly reduced butt and incipient lugs (Duff's Type 1A³¹), but there are three with front narrower than back which do not conform exactly to any of Duff's types and two small ungripped quadrangular specimens. Surface collections are said to contain mainly Types 1A and 4A, with other types represented in small numbers.

Ornaments include bird bone beads, perforated seal teeth, small bone and ivory reels, fossil dentalium beads, and a shell pendant possibly intended as an imitation of a large seal tooth. Several tattooing chisels with broad blades are of particular interest. The assemblage also includes bone needles, a possible bone cloak pin, and various awls and pickers. There are a number of distinctive chisel-shaped artefacts of moa bone, identified as probable skin burnishers, and a small, carefully-shaped bone object which might be a teka or dart head.

Stone flakes of obsidian, basalt and various siliceous rocks were very numerous. The obsidian flakes are large, and relatively few show evidence of retouching or use. The siliceous flakes are mainly by-products from the manufacture of drill points, which were numerous, and were almost certainly used in fishhook manufacture.

A recent study has shown that the basalt of the adzes and flakes comes from the Tahanga quarry on the Coromandel Peninsula. More than 90 percent of the obsidian is from Mayor Island, with small amounts from the nearby Kaeo sources and at least one other source. The material used for drill points, identified as siliceous sinter, is also likely to be from the Coromandel Peninsula, probably from the Kuaotunu Peninsula in the general vicinity of the Tahanga quarry.³²

Detailed study of the economy of the occupants of the Mount Camel site has shown that although they hunted moas, the moa was not the most important item of diet, whether considered in terms of numbers of bones in the midden or the meat weight and food value they represent. There is evidence that the people ate 43 seals, 8 dolphins, 40 dogs, 15 rats, approximately 50 moas (mostly of the species *Euryapteryx exilis* and *E. curtus*), a number of other birds (including extinct swan and extinct crow), and more than 2,000 fish, including over 100 trevalli, 50-80 kahawai, 60 miscellaneous fish representing about 10 species, and over 2,300 snapper. This is a very detailed analysis of their diet and it is clear that the inhabitants of Mount Camel should be called sealers and fishermen before they are called moa-hunters, since seals and fish contributed so much more meat to the diet. The distribution of bones in the midden revealed something about food habits: whole mammal carcasses were brought to the site, particularly during the

first occupation. Fish heads were also found on 'living areas' but other fish bones were scattered around the cooking area. A few whole moa skeletons were present, but generally only certain bones were represented. There were no claws, suggesting that moas were killed elsewhere and inessentials removed before the carcass was brought to the settlement. In addition to the two main moa species mentioned above, rare examples of *E. geranoides*, *Anomalopteryx didiformis*, *Dinornis struthoides* and *D. giganteus* were present. Many of the fishhooks were probably made from *Dinornis* bones.

No definite house plans were located and nothing was learned of burial customs. Within the small area of the excavation it was possible to recognise a pattern with living and working floors towards the centre and cooking areas with ovens around the perimeter. The evidence has been interpreted as representing perhaps twelve successive summer occupations by several small family groups with a total population each season of fewer than 50 people. There is no indication of where these people may have lived at other times of the year, or what form their winter settlements might have taken.

Above the main occupation layers was a deposit interpreted as an agricultural soil, for which there is a single radiocarbon date of A.D. 1394 \pm 55. A small, ground, ungripped quadrangular adze was associated with this deposit. If the radiocarbon result correctly dates the soil, it would appear that the site has a long subsequent history as a garden, for recently abandoned Maori cultivations, including peach trees, were seen here in the latter half of the 19th century.³³

Mount Camel is the only Northland site excavated and analysed by modern techniques which has provided an artefact assemblage that can be described as Archaic, and midden remains that include moas. It shows that at least in this part of Northland, Archaic sites exist which are comparable to early sites far better known in other areas of the country. However, Mount Camel is probably far from unique in Northland. Over the years, abundant surface finds in the drifting sand dunes of Doubtless Bay, Great Exhibition Bay, and the beaches of the extreme north (particularly Spirits Bay, Tom Bowling Bay, Twilight Beach, and Werahi) have suggested the former presence of numerous sites with Archaic artefacts and moa bones, many of them now damaged or totally destroyed by erosion and curio hunting. The far north should therefore be seen as an area of Archaic settlement comparable to the Coromandel.

It has been suggested that Mount Camel alone in the north shows the close ties to the Coromandel through stone resources, and that some features of the midden suggest the first arrival of settlers in a virgin region.³⁴ However, the presence of some local Northland material in the site argues against this view. Moreover, although the artefacts show many similarities with Coromandel assemblages, there are some forms at Mount Camel not yet known in the Coromandel, including biperforate lure points and the broad tattooing chisels. It is more reasonable to suppose that Mount Camel is a good representative of one aspect of early Polynesian settlement in the far north — the summer hunting/fishing camp — but is by no means unique.

As mentioned above, parts of the far north have a particularly dense archaeological landscape, comprising many different kinds of prehistoric site, some of which are found around Mount Camel itself, as well as at a distance. The increasing evidence of early horticulture in other parts of the country, together with the abundant later evidence that the far north was a particularly favourable region for Polynesian horticulture, make it very likely that the earliest settlers of the north, and the inhabitants of Mount Camel in particular, were also horticulturalists. The earliest evidence of horticulture to date, however, comes from some distance away, in the Bay of Islands.

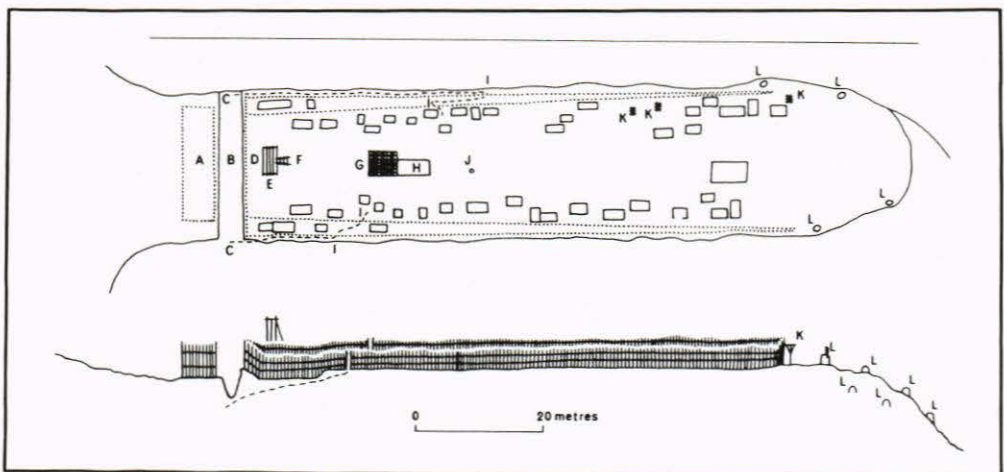
On Moturua Island in the south-east of the bay, a series of shallow ditches on a

slope (a common form of field evidence in the north) associated with an artificial soil (N12/6), were found to cut into an earlier buried horizon consisting of brownish/grey soil mixed with beach pebbles, fragmented soil and charcoal. An initial radiocarbon assessment for this deposit of A.D. 800 ± 90 made it appear one of the earliest known sites in the country. Subsequent investigation of the site, however, has shown that this date probably derives from old charcoal in the soil, the result of initial clearance and burning. The artificial soil was buried beneath a substantial slip at the base of a steep slope. Additional radiocarbon dates are A.D. 1230 ± 100 for the earliest charcoal (layer 6) and A.D. 1440 ± 85 and A.D. 1420 ± 90 for the artificial soil (layer 5).³⁵ Even though the earliest radiocarbon date is unlikely to be an accurate reflection of the age of the site, the cultivation soils at Moturua may be contemporary with, or only slightly later than, the settlement at Mount Camel.

At neither Mount Camel nor Moturua have storage pits been found associated with the garden soils. With such limited excavation, this is hardly surprising. In view of the strong connections between Northland and Coromandel in the use of stone resources (a flake of Tahanga basalt was also found at Moturua) and the early presence of storage pits in the latter area, it seems likely that storage pits will also be found to be early in Northland.

Mount Camel and the Moturua garden are the only excavated sites in Northland that can be considered 'early' in the prehistoric sequence. The remaining excavated sites belong either to the last two or three centuries of the prehistoric period or to early European times.

Excavation of the garden soils at Moturua was part of a programme of archaeological exploration of the south-east Bay of Islands at the close of the prehistoric period. This included a site survey; correlation of visible archaeological sites with those reported by the expedition of Marion du Fresne (who spent three months in the Bay of Islands in 1772) and excavation of two such sites — Te Kuri's Village (N12/200) on the mainland, and Paeroa Pa (N12/1) on Moturua.



- 1.6 Plan and section of Paeroa Pa redrawn from original French sources of Marion du Fresne's visit in 1772. The letters refer to: (A) outer palisaded work; (B) dry ditch; (C) entrance paths; (D) rampart; (E) fighting stage; (F) ladder to fighting stage; (G) rack on which to place the weapons; (H) house of the chief, serving also as a store for the weapons; (I) gates; (J) stake having a very hideous head in the shape of a box; (K) trellises supported by stakes on which to place fern roots for drying; (L) small houses for seine nets, and they have some of the same shape to store potatoes, yams and fern roots which are, like their dwellings, waterproof.

Both sites were precisely located and described by the French, and Paeroa is unique in that a detailed plan was made of it after it was sacked by the French in retaliation for the killing of Marion du Fresne (Fig. 1.6). The research programme was triggered by the prospect of extensive tree planting on Paeroa Pa which would damage subsurface features of the site.³⁶

The excavations on Paeroa revealed that reoccupation between 1772 and 1820 had largely obliterated the structures of the 1772 settlement. Traces of an earlier occupation before 1772 remained as a series of small, deliberately filled storage pits. These were succeeded by the truncated remains of what was assumed to be the 1772 settlement, severely reduced by a later reoccupation thought to date to about 1820. Later still, much of the site was used for cultivations, reflected in an extensive 'kumara soil' similar to the uppermost layer of the nearby Moturua garden site. The excavations at what was believed to be the site of Te Kuri's Village revealed a long line of small rectangular pits similar in structure to those of the earliest occupation of Paeroa, a scatter of obsidian and other stone flakes, and sparse midden. It was concluded that this was probably a minor storage component to the west of the main village area.

Artefacts from Paeroa included a number of bone fishhooks (some fragments of shanks and heads not totally dissimilar from some Archaic specimens, others displaying the barbs and notches more typical of later forms), a barbed shell hook fragment, a small bone 'kinked' pendant, a small, squat, well polished 2B adze, a 'Virgin Mary medal' possibly distributed by 19th century Catholic missionaries, and a pewter spoon. Many of these items probably belong to the protohistoric period, and provide an important, if small, assemblage from this time.

The principal excavated site near Whangarei is the small terraced hill pa of Ruarangi (N20/41), a little south of the city. It consists of three areas: a central high point or tihī, an inner terrace with high scarps, and an outer terrace with lesser scarps. There is some indication that palisades were built at an early stage in the site's history, but during the main occupation defence depended mainly on the scarps. No storage pits were found, and the main evidence of occupation consisted of clay floors with irregular and insubstantial postholes, scoop hearths, drains, and pavements of limestone slabs (Fig. 1.7). Later house floors were of small slabs, with oval, stone-outlined hearths. Considerable shell midden built up during occupation of the site, and chert, probably obtained locally, was extensively worked during the final stages of occupation. Apart from chert and obsidian flakes, the only artefacts found were six stone adzes of 2B form and a worked paua shell fragment, possibly from a fishing lure. Two radiocarbon dates partially bracket the occupation between A.D. 1630 ± 80 and A.D. 1780 ± 80.³⁷

The excavation of Ruarangi was undertaken in conjunction with the investigation of an associated burial cave, both being threatened with destruction by quarrying. Traditional information suggested that the pa was built by an ancestor, Torongare, some nine generations before the present and occupied for several generations, and that the burial cave was used by the descendants of the same group after abandonment of the pa.³⁸ Although the radiocarbon dates indicate the possibility of longer occupation of the pa than is suggested by the admittedly fragmentary traditions, there is general agreement between traditional and archaeological evidence of its age.

Several of the distinctive features of Ruarangi, notably shell midden, chert working, and insubstantial structures, were also found at a presumed open settlement on the northern side of Whangarei Harbour. This site, known as the Northland Harbour Board site (N20/102), was scheduled for destruction by quarrying for spoil.³⁹ At both these sites, the absence of storage pits is of interest (although there are pits on the ridge outside the pa at Ruarangi). Despite the presence in the Whangarei region of numerous large pits, it would appear that the occupants of



1.7 A carefully laid pavement of limestone slabs uncovered during excavation of a living terrace at Ruarangi, near Whangarei (Anthropology Department, University of Auckland).

some relatively late sites, both fortified and unfortified, either depended on pits outside their immediate habitation area, or were at times without storage pits, perhaps primarily dependent on fern root rather than kumara horticulture.

In marked contrast to the insubstantial structures at Ruarangi is a large excavated house at a site in the inland Bay of Islands, known as Poor Hill (N15/43).⁴⁰ Situated on an outcrop of sedimentary rock with infertile soil, although adjacent to richer volcanic soils, this remarkable site was revealed in an extraordinarily fresh state of preservation when it was cleared of scrub prior to agricultural development (which resulted in the eventual destruction of the site). On the slopes below a ridge-top pa (an unimpressive rectangular ditch and bank enclosure) was an extensive series of level terraces of varying size (Fig. 1.8) with a carefully planned system of drainage to carry water around and away from the flat areas. Excavation of the largest of these revealed a large house, and it can be assumed that other terraces also carried houses. A number of stone adzes and some other stone items were found on the surface after clearing, but there were no items of European material culture at all, making it difficult to sustain a hypothesis that this was a post-European settlement, despite its remarkable freshness of feature. The Poor Hill house is by far the largest prehistoric house yet excavated in New Zealand and appears to have been some kind of community house or chief's house in a large settlement of smaller dwellings. This in itself is interesting, since unusually large houses do not seem to have been a feature of Northland settlements at European contact.

The excavations at these relatively late prehistoric and protohistoric Northland sites merely illustrate the variety of structures and settlement types to be expected in the north. Obviously a much greater sample would need to be excavated before any definitive statement could be made about late settlement plans or house types even in one small part of Northland, let alone throughout the region.



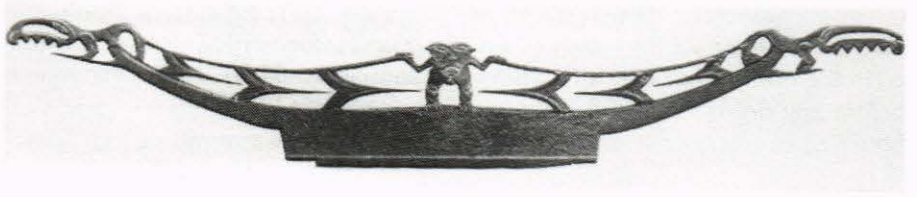
1.8 The settlement at Poor Hill, inland Bay of Islands. The living terraces and a complicated water drainage system were revealed in almost pristine condition when dense scrub was cleared from the site. An exceptionally large house occupied the large terrace just to the right of centre (Auckland Museum).

The material culture of some of the earliest settlers of Northland is relatively well represented by the archaeological assemblage from Mount Camel. The material culture of the 18th century inhabitants of the region is not yet well defined from archaeological evidence, but there are indications of distinctive regional features. An interesting small assemblage of fishing gear, collected from an eroding beach section near Whatuwhiwhi in recent years (and now in the Auckland Museum), provides an interesting contrast with the material from nearby Mount Camel. It includes small one-piece hooks of bone and shell, some of which are notched, a barbed and serrated bone point, and a series of long bone shanks for two-piece hooks made from human rib bones. Clay pipe stems have also been found in this site, which, like Paeroa, may prove to be partly post-European in age. The shell fishhooks and the rib bone shanks can be matched exactly by ethnographic specimens with intact lashings in the British Museum. These, unfortunately, are not precisely localised, but are likely to have been collected in northern New Zealand. Large bone shanks, made not of human rib but of sea mammal bone, have also been found in the extreme north.

Other items defined by earlier ethnologists as typical of northern material culture include certain forms of greenstone amulet, short-bevelled squat 2B adzes (which on Mount Camel evidence may prove to have a long history in the north) and certain kinds of fishing sinker. None of these has yet been adequately documented by excavation.

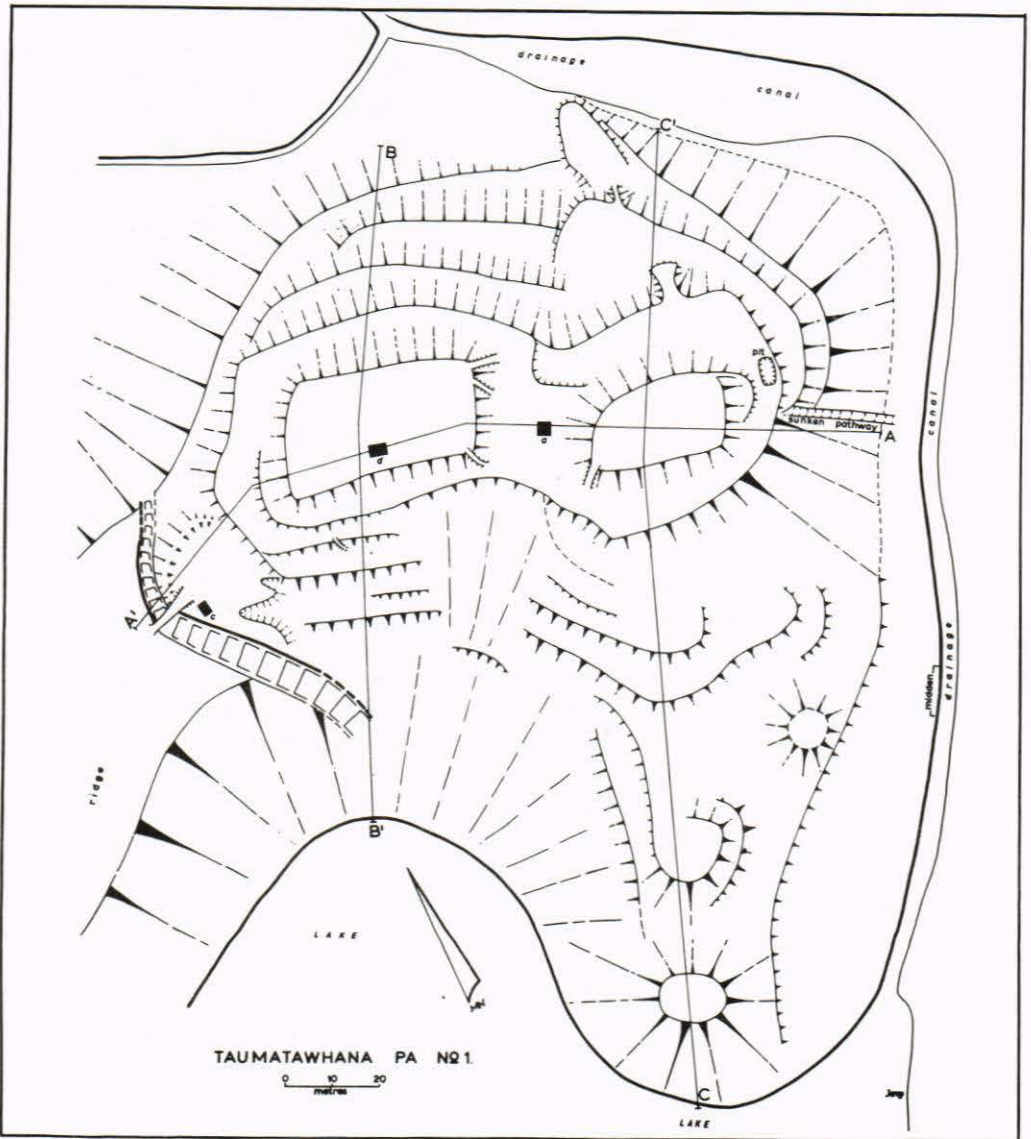
A glimpse of another important aspect of Northland material culture is provided by the abundant wooden artefacts which have been found in the swamps of the

Material Culture



1.9 The Kaitaia carving, now in the Auckland Museum.

far north. Some of these, including the famous Kaitaia 'lintel' (Fig. 1.9) have been regarded as Archaic, and have been found in contexts which provided little or no clue to their probable age. Others have been found in swamps at the edge of pa. These include both tools such as digging sticks and beaters, and house carvings. Particular mention may be made of the site of Taumatawhana (or Tomoatawhanu) at Onepe (Fig.1.10), a spectacular double tihī pa adjacent to a small



1.10 Plan of Taumatawhana Pa, a typical 'twin tihī' (or 'double citadel') pa of the far north. Wooden artefacts now in the Far North Regional Museum were found at the lake edge during drainage operations.

lake from whose fringes have come quantities of wooden material, including an apparently adzed tree stump which has yielded a remarkably early radiocarbon date. The artefacts are clearly Maori, however, and it seems that another explanation must be sought for the stump than that it was actually adzed by man at the time indicated by the date. Test excavations on Taumatawhana were inconclusive. It lacks surface evidence of storage pits. Traditional references suggest a protohistoric age. The use of the area and the lake itself may, however, be much older than the construction of the pa in its present (and traditionally remembered) form.

The existing swamp carvings indicate the possibilities for further discoveries with better documentation of future finds. Detailed excavation of swamps in other parts of the North Island in recent years have revealed the potential for this type of work in the north. Meanwhile, a new approach to a distinctive northern wooden artefact form, hitherto not systematically studied, has shown what can be learned from certain types of artefact with restricted distribution. Carved wooden burial chests are a distinctive northern form, found mainly in caves in the central part of Northland. Detailed study of all known examples⁴¹ (some sixty in all) has shown something of the role played by these awesome and impressive artefacts in the lives of the various hapu who made and used them. Moreover, the stylistic development of some aspects of northern regional carving styles can be traced in these chests from forms of Archaic affiliation to those of post-European times.

Although Northland is a clearly defined geographic region, relatively isolated from the rest of the country, and with certain distinctive features of landscape and climate, it is a region of considerable archaeological complexity, whose prehistory is still little known. In certain gross respects, it can be distinguished as a Culture Area as Skinner long ago demonstrated. On closer investigation, however, it becomes necessary to subdivide it into smaller sub-regions for useful discussion of regional prehistory. At present these sub-regions are centred around the few excavations that have so far taken place, rather than around more meaningful divisions. The ever increasing data from site surveys hint at both geographical and cultural/tribal divisions in both site density and type of site distribution. Such suggestions need careful testing by detailed excavation programmes, but the prospects for such work in the immediate future, other than on a very limited scale, appear slight.

The far north, here defined roughly as the area from Ahipara to North Cape, including Doubtless Bay, is a region of great archaeological potential. The Mount Camel excavation and the numerous finds of Archaic artefacts and bone-rich middens show that this part of Northland, at least, contains the sort of Archaic material long recognised from other parts of the country. At the same time, the widespread absence of forest at European contact, the numerous storage pits, and other evidences of horticulture, strongly suggest that the Archaic settlement was accompanied by early and extensive horticultural activity. The swamp finds indicate the long development of a rich wood-carving tradition. Surface collections hint at developments in other classes of artefact, from the typically eastern Polynesian or Archaic assemblage of Mount Camel to distinctively northern regional styles. The field monuments are sufficiently striking to offer an important field of study in their own right. Two particular problems may be noted. At one end of the sequence, a recent study suggests that a number of birds of many species (including moas) died naturally in the sand dunes just before human settlement⁴² Further research may yet show that these events correlate with the arrival of man and fire in the district, even though the remains are found in natural deposits rather than in middens. At the other end of the sequence, there appears to have been a very eventful but relatively poorly documented protohistoric

Discussion

period. During this time, upheavals due to the growing European presence in the Bay of Islands and the use of muskets in tribal warfare made marked impressions on the far north. It is probable that many of the rectangular ditch and bank fortifications belong to this era, but it may be very difficult to document these and other changes.

Between Doubtless Bay and Whangarei is the area sometimes known as the 'Archaic gap' mentioned above, in which there is very little evidence of Archaic material culture as it is generally known, or of bone-rich middens. This gap needs to be verified and the reasons for its existence defined. The Moturua gardens indicate the fairly early presence of horticultural settlement, and it may be that the Archaic gap is related to a gap in distribution of moas. Equally, the gap may be more apparent than real, or there may be particular features of site destruction or erosion at work which have not yet been recognised. Both the Bay of Islands and its hinterland, with their dense archaeological landscapes and extensive deforestation at first European contact, promise a long and important history of horticultural occupation. The Poor Hill settlement and its house indicate the possible size of the lesser prehistoric settlements of the Ohaeawai-Waimate region; Pouerua, and some of the other large sites, present almost insurmountable challenges to archaeological excavation. The Bay of Islands also provides scope for the most detailed correlation of archaeological and historical study available anywhere in the country, both for the close of the prehistoric period (despite the unsatisfactory results at Paeroa) and for the first decades of the 19th century. This is not prehistory, of course, but it is part of the archaeological sequence. As will have been apparent, the line between prehistory and protohistory in the north is difficult if not impossible to draw from surface archaeological evidence alone.

The ocean beaches east of Whangarei, particularly at Pataua, provide a definite break in the Archaic gap, although the evidence may now be largely destroyed. The later excavated sites appear to reflect a particular sub-regional aspect, but the sample is too small, and the field evidence suggests a more varied range of archaeological sites and features than is apparent from the excavations. This also appeared a well-populated and wealthy area to the early explorers, and archaeology has as yet done little justice to it.

The west coast is even harder to characterize, because it lacks excavations, except those at South Kaipara, which are considered as part of the Auckland region. Here too, field evidence, and in some cases surface finds, suggest a considerable potential for future research. Lastly, the in-between areas, not mentioned particularly in this summary, may prove to have possibilities just as exciting, if chance finds or expediency bring them to the attention of archaeologists.

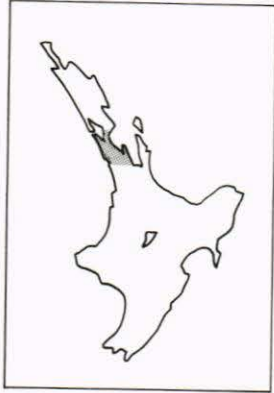
It is obviously not yet possible to present a summary of Northland prehistory according to chronological divisions. Clearly, there was considerable adaptation and change from the initial establishment of Archaic material culture, broad-spectrum hunting and horticulture, to the well established regional styles and activities of the flourishing 18th century population. Much of the inspiration for change may have been generated locally. However, the people of Northland seem always to have been in regular contact with those of other regions. Such contact is reflected both in the import and export of obsidian and the import of artefacts of such diverse material as Nelson meta-somatised argillite, Tahanga basalt, and greenstone. Influences and ideas probably flowed both ways. The end result was a society and culture which had certain distinctive features, but which shared many characteristics with other regions.

Notes

1. McKenzie, 1959; Lister, 1976, p. 5.
2. Suggate and Riddolls, 1976.
3. Leamy and Fieldes, 1976, pp. 124-125.
4. Tomlinson, 1976, p. 83.
5. Wendelken, 1976, pp. 98 and 104.
6. Holloway, 1959; Wendelken, 1976, p. 104.
7. Beaglehole, 1962, Vol. 1, p. 444.
8. e.g. Polack, 1838, Vol. 1, p. 198.
9. K. Shawcross, 1967.
10. Coster and Cassels, 1979, p. 122.
11. Ward, 1974, p. 55.
12. Reeves and Ward, 1976, p. 283.
13. Moore, 1977, pp. 55, 81-82.
14. Davidson, 1981.
15. Best, 1977, pp. 323-325.
16. Skinner, 1921 and 1974, pp. 18-26.
17. Duff, 1947, p. 318 and 1956b.
18. Golson, 1959; Green, 1963.
19. Golson, 1955, pp. 123-124 and 1959, Plate 1A.
20. Groube, 1970; Simmons, 1971.
21. Mitchell, 1979.
22. Coster and Cassels, 1979, p. 125.
23. Davidson, 1975a, 1975b, 1975c and 1975d.
24. Leahy and Walsh, n.d.a.
25. Leahy and Walsh, n.d.b.
26. Leahy and Walsh, n.d.c.
27. Fox, 1976a.
28. Leahy and Walsh, n.d.d.
29. Thorne, 1876.
30. Roe, 1969; Shawcross, 1972.
31. Duff, 1956a, Chapter V.
32. Best, 1977, p. 318; Best, pers. comm.
33. Cheeseman, 1897, p. 349.
34. Best, 1975, pp. 25, 33-35; Shawcross, 1972, p. 611; Swadling, 1977, p. 13.
35. Peters, 1975.
36. Groube, 1964, 1965 and 1966.
37. Hougaard, 1971; Green, 1975.
38. Oppenheim, 1971.
39. A. Walton and R. Nichol, pers. comm.; Nichol and Williams, 1980.
40. Fox, 1976b, Fig. 30.
41. Fox, 1980a.
42. P. Millener, pers. comm.

AUCKLAND

Janet Davidson



The modern metropolis of Auckland lies at the heart of a region rich in prehistory. Just as the Auckland isthmus is today one of the most popular areas for modern settlement, so in the past it was attractive to prehistoric Polynesian settlers. Its Maori name, Tamaki-makau-rau, or Tamaki-of-the-hundred-lovers, is said to symbolize its attraction and the fact that it was fought over by numerous warring groups seeking possession of its rich resources.¹

The area described in this chapter centres on the Auckland isthmus, but reaches beyond it in all directions, for the isthmus alone is too small an area for a meaningful reconstruction of prehistory to be made.

The greater Auckland area extends north to South

Kaipara Head and south to the Waikato Heads on the west coast, covering a comparable area of the east coast and including the inner islands of the Hauraki Gulf, which are particularly rich in surviving archaeological remains (Fig. 2.1).

The Auckland isthmus (Fig. 2.2) lies at the narrowest point of the North Island, bounded by the Waitemata Harbour on the north and the larger Manukau Harbour on the south. The Waitemata opens to the relatively sheltered waters of the Hauraki Gulf with its indented coastline and numerous islands, while the Manukau opens to the more tempestuous and exposed west coast, with its long expanses of open beaches. At several points the distance between the two harbours is so slight that canoes could be dragged across fairly easily. The isthmus is thus at the centre of an area rich in marine resources and readily accessible to prehistoric settlers.

The natural landscape

The oldest rocks of the region are the Jurassic and Triassic sediments which form some of the Hauraki Gulf islands and the large and often hilly block of land to the south-east, fringing the Hauraki Gulf. An area of Quaternary volcanics lies to the south around Pukekohe, and there are older Tertiary basalts and conglomerates to the west, north of the Manukau Heads. Both the south Kaipara and south Manukau peninsulas and the land immediately south of the Manukau are composed of Quaternary sediments;² the two former areas are rich in prehistoric sites, but the latter, now a rich dairy farming region, was apparently relatively little occupied in prehistoric times.

The landscape of Tamaki itself is characterized by numerous small volcanic cones, representing spasmodic volcanic activity over the last 50,000 years.³ These Quaternary volcanoes have overlain Tertiary sediments in the immediate vicinity. The youngest and largest of the volcanoes, Rangitoto, broods over the entrance to the Waitemata. It is the only one of the volcanoes active during human occupation of the region and its appearance and growth to its present form must have been one of the most dramatic events in Auckland prehistory.

Among the soils of the region are some found also in Northland, such as northern yellow brown earths, podzols, yellow-brown sands and red and brown loams