



NEW ZEALAND  
ARCHAEOLOGICAL  
ASSOCIATION

**NEW ZEALAND ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER**



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THE NEW ZEALAND ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION CONFERENCE: 1967

Wilfred Shawcross.

The biennial conference of the Association was held this year at New Plymouth and consisted of two field trips and sixteen papers given to an estimated attendance of over fifty members, who had come from all over New Zealand and one speaker even coming from Australia. The meetings were held in the lecture hall and library at the Taranaki Museum and it is pleasant to record that these facilities gave the greatest satisfaction and must have materially contributed to the general feeling of being able to settle down and concentrate without interruption on the field of study.

The theme round which the papers were organised was that of settlements and earthworks, rather than the broader scope of current research in New Zealand. And on consideration it is impressive that so much work could be brought to bear on the topic, when it is realised that much of the South Island is poor in this kind of evidence. On the other hand, the topic was particularly appropriate for a conference in Taranaki, because this area is notably rich in earthworks and has been especially well served in its field archaeology.

The opening papers were given on the evening of Wednesday, 10th of May, and were:

- (1) The Traditional Evidence for Maori Warfare, by Dr Robertson, Kawhia.

This paper outlined the results of the author's long studies of Maori traditions, out of which he has constructed a history of tribal developments and political relations. On genealogical dating it is concluded that there was a sharp development of tribal expansion about the 16th Century. The second part of the paper was concerned with the traditional evidence for the form taken by warfare, both in its weapons and in the importance of the pitched battle in the open, away from static defences behind earthworks.

This paper was read by the Association's secretary, Miss Janet Davidson, as Dr Robertson was unfortunately not able to attend. This was doubly unfortunate as the subject raised a number of interesting topics for discussion.

(2) Historical Evidence for Maori Warfare, by Mrs Kathleen Shawcross, Auckland.

This paper presented a historian's examination of the documentary evidence for Maori warfare in the late 18th and 19th Centuries. It is evident that considerable changes took place owing to contact with Europeans and three stages may be observed.

1. The supremacy of a few groups achieved through the possession of guns.
2. A state of stalemate when all groups had guns.
3. Development taking place once more owing to warfare with Europeans.

During the first two stages the pa maintained many of the features of the pre-gun fortification, retaining the earthworks but dropping exposed positions. In the third stage new forms of earthwork were specifically developed.

THURSDAY, MAY 11TH

(3) A Survey of Systems of Site Classification, by Mr Peter Gathercole

The objective of this paper was to present a review of methods which have been used in classifying sites. The first classifier was Elsdon Best whose system was topographical, that is, based on the natural situations on which the site was located. This same system was adopted by Jack Golson when he revived the development of field archaeology in this country. A different approach was employed by Dr Alastair Buist in his North Taranaki work, where the sites are classified according to the complexity of their structural components.

This survey provided a most useful guide to the succeeding trend of the conference and roused a considerable discussion on the subject of Typology and its validity and application.

(4) An Investigation of the Tourist Potential of a Maori Pa, by Mr Bruce McFadgen, Wellington.

Mr McFadgen put forward a strong argument that the causes of education and tourism should be served by the careful display and preservation of an excavated pa. He pointed out that similar archaeological displays had been highly successful in other countries if they were carried out in a

businesslike manner, and he then demonstrated the theoretical costing of such an enterprise, evaluating its economic possibilities in an important population and tourist centre like Wellington. Such an operation would be expensive but economically practicable.

The paper was followed by a lively discussion centred round the questions of how far archaeologists should take their reconstructions and to what extent they should involve themselves in such enterprises. Mr D. Pick of Hamilton endorsed the idea of developing such a scheme for educational and tourist purposes in other areas.

(5) A Study of the Form and Distribution of Pa, by Mr Leslie Groube, Auckland University.

Mr Groube first discussed his own studies of the typology of sites, illustrating a variety of approaches and comparing archaeological systems with those employed in Biology. He then outlined the results of his analysis carried out by a mechanical device of his own invention, which works according to the mathematical principle of vectors, whereby a value can be given to a variety of differently weighted elements, in this case features of the defensive systems and geographical information. The result shows a division into Eastern and Western groups.

The discussion of this paper centred on the validity of typologies, which Mr Groube demonstrated to be largely unsatisfactory, and further discussion centred on aspects of this new system of analysis.

This paper was followed by a set of shorter papers presented by regional file-keepers of the Site Recording Scheme who provided information on developments within their areas.

(6) South Taranaki, by Dr Alastair Buist, Hawera.

Dr Buist has already published his Archaeology of North Taranaki, which is primarily a survey of earthwork distribution in a particularly rich area and is almost certainly the most comprehensive survey available. This is now being followed by a comparable study of South Taranaki, which is found to possess a number of distinctive features. The pattern of distribution is not clustered on the coast as in the northern area, but along the waterway systems, and a remarkable feature is the paucity of pa sites in an area of intensive Maori cultivation soils.

- (7) The Auckland Area, by Miss Anne Leahy, Auckland.

Much of the Taranaki work was the result of the concentrated efforts of an individual, but in Auckland the surveying has been more of a group activity and divided up among many areas and individuals. It therefore cannot at this stage be expected to show a particularly consistent pattern. However, some areas, such as several of the islands in the Hauraki Gulf have been intensively studied.

- (8) Northland, by Mr Stanley Bartlett, Whangarei.

This is a large area which has only quite recently had its own central file. Progress here is slow and scrappy owing to there being few people interested in site recording. The question was raised about what minimal quantity of information is thought necessary for a site record form. For the purposes of many kinds of study and as a record for posterity a well-drawn plan is considered to be necessary, but this requires considerable effort and time, and some believe that a grid reference and some brief statement of form may be a sufficient preliminary record. There is nothing to stop the worker or others adding information at a later date.

- (9) Fortifications in the Pacific Outside New Zealand, by Dr Roger Green, Bishop Museum.

In Elsdon Best's days there was pitifully little information on fortifications in other parts of Polynesia. This led to Best seeing a Melanesian contact between New Zealand and Fiji, where defensive earthworks were well-known. Subsequently, highly developed systems of fortification have been recorded in Samoa and Tonga and also in Eastern Polynesia, particularly the Marquesas, adding considerably to the previously observed connections between New Zealand and that area in the smaller articles of material culture. This, of course, leads to opening the question of the possibility of external influences being responsible for the development of New Zealand fortifications, as against the belief in their indigenous development. This discussion had the salutary effect of moving outside New Zealand and opening up the much broader perspective of Pacific Prehistory.

FRIDAY, MAY 12TH

- (10) Warfare in the South Island, by Dr Roger Duff, Canterbury Museum.

As noted previously, the South Island area is relatively poorly off for fortifications. Dr Duff therefore examined the documentary and traditional sources of information on warfare in the Chatham Islands, which have for long been looked on as a laboratory area in the study of Maori culture. It may be supposed that Moriori warfare would be a survival of the earlier form practised on the mainland, and records show that it had become ritualized, for which a strong cause would be economy. The choice of indigenous development or the introduction of warfare into New Zealand from outside was examined by Dr Duff, who concluded for the former.

- (11) A Study of Weapons of War, by Mr Ian Keyes, Wellington.

This paper was unique, being the only one in the whole conference concerned with the study of portable artefacts and was particularly interesting because of some new ideas which it was possible to put forward, on the basis of recent research. The single-handed club is a characteristic Maori weapon and studies have been made tracing its history in early New Zealand sites and in areas outside. A distinction may be seen between clubs for domestic functions, such as the despatching of sea mammals, and true war weapons, for which it is possible to assemble evidence for an internal development derived from external influences.

- (12) The Role of Fortification in Settlement Form, by Mr Lesle Groube, Auckland University.

Mr Groube, having previously examined the typology and distribution of the pa, now discussed its function in the pattern of settlement. He pointed out that the idea has grown up that the pa was a sort of permanent fortified village, but that early European records do not support this, showing instead that they were occupied only on a semi-permanent basis and may have served more as fortified stores. He suggested, however, that formerly there were much larger units, which may well have been large defended settlements, and the development of these might coincide with the dating evidence put forward by Dr Robertson.

- (13) Earthwork Fortifications in European Prehistory, by Mr Peter Bellwood, Auckland University.

Elsdon Best long ago drew attention to the Iron Age hill forts of Britain, and it is therefore interesting to see what has been learned from the study of such sites in Europe. Well developed fortifications appear there during the Bronze Age and became a widely established and

important feature of the Iron Age. They were frequently built on high ground, but some were on flat land, making use of forest as a defence, or were built up on platforms in swamps and lakes. In some areas they were clearly fully settled townships, whereas in others there is no evidence for large, permanent populations.

(14) The Ngaroto Excavation, by Mr Wilfred Shawcross, Auckland University.

This was a preliminary report on a current excavation programme. The site is a large, artificial island built on a timber platform, on the edge of a lake, and its great depth of successive occupation surfaces, with house floors and associated artefacts, offers hope of answering questions on the development of material culture and the nature of settlement. These are unlikely to be so readily answered on the more usual dry land sites, through the thinness of their deposits and their frequent destruction by soil formation and agriculture. Those house floors so far exposed on this site indicate quite flimsy structures, but, on the other hand, this site suggests much more strongly a degree of permanent occupation than do others previously excavated.

(15) The Kauri Point Excavation, by Mr Wallace Ambrose, Australian National University.

This paper was of the highest interest as it represents the concluding stages in the preparation of a report on work covering a period of nearly seven years, carried out on this northern Bay of Plenty site. This is by far the most intensive investigation of a pa to have been made up to the present time. Mr Ambrose discussed the original reasons for investigating the site and then outlined the sequence of occupations and their changing nature as disclosed by the excavations, pointing out that it would be erroneous to think of these steps as periods. He then went on to analyse the functions of the earthworks, in particular the pits, which have been a source of controversial interpretation for some time. He demonstrated by means of archaeological evidence that the Kauri Point pits could only be interpreted as food stores.

It was particularly stimulating to attend this paper as it marks a decided development in New Zealand Archaeology and provides a standard of quality of work and interpretation of evidence by which future work may be judged.

SATURDAY, MAY 13TH

- (16) An evaluation of the work so far and an outline of future trends,  
by Dr Charles Higham, Otago University.

Dr Higham reviewed the various methods of study which had been employed on New Zealand earthwork sites and drew attention to the weaknesses of the typological approach and to inferences drawn from frequency distributions without being tested by the appropriate statistical methods. He then showed how archaeology was developing in Europe and America by means of the integration of a range of analytical studies including Pedology, Palaeontology, and Palaeobotany. The problem in New Zealand is not ignorance of this approach but the difficulty of establishing the necessary qualified personnel and equipment. At this degree of specialization even the New Zealanders' noted capacity for "do it yourself" activity is seriously strained, but it is evident that Archaeology is moving here into this field of integrated studies.

- (17) Summary of papers, by Mr Wilfred Shawcross, Auckland University.

This paper contained the substance of the foregoing review and concluded the scientific matter of the conference. It was followed by a discussion in which several matters were raised which will be referred to below. In the afternoon, Dr Buist led a field trip and the Annual General Meeting of the Association was held in the evening.

The business of the Annual General Meeting is recorded in the minutes but there are several points arising out of this meeting and the discussions of the papers which warrant some attention, so that they are not lost in obscurity. There is no particular significance to their order.

Mr Mandeno of Te Awamutu and Mr Scott-Maundrell of Wanganui drew the attention of the Association to the difficulties experienced by small groups of enthusiasts in areas isolated from the main centres of activity. It is felt that people in such areas would be helped by encouragement and guidance from those best qualified to give it. At the same time experienced archaeologists are both involved in their own work and have difficulty in finding the time and money for extensive travelling. One solution has been for local groups to arrange for University Extension Weekend Schools to be organized in their area. Such have been carried out in the Auckland region at Kaitaia, Kaihohe, Whangarei, Hamilton, and even as far afield as Hawkes Bay. In addition, visits by individual members of the Association may be made and this is particularly likely to happen where there are local museums and collections.



Mr K. Jolly raised the question of the public image of Archaeology here. This is a somewhat difficult phenomenon to evaluate and even more difficult to influence. It is felt that more publicity of a creative sort is desirable and some success has been achieved in this at the main centres; Auckland, for various reasons, being perhaps the least successful. Much more could certainly be achieved in the way of educational television and radio programmes and also printed matter, but it is fair to add that some forms of publicity have not produced any obviously beneficial results and may even disrupt work, while archaeologists should remember that they are competing with many other organizations striving for a share of publicity.

Something which arises out of these discussions is that members expect rather more than just archaeology to come out of the Association. The constitution entrusts it with the task of general archaeological education, which is served by the biennial conferences and the publication of the Newsletter and monographs. In addition, the Association serves the important task of conservation through its site recording scheme. But to support these activities there is only a membership of between two and three hundred and an inspection of the carefully nursed balance sheet shows that this number barely supports these three activities. If the Association is therefore to embark on a more ambitious programme of activities, it needs more substantial financial backing than it at present commands. This might be achieved by an effort to substantially increase the membership, but its relative stability over the past few years argues against this being particularly rewarding. An alternative way of increasing membership and income would be to tap the increasing local archaeological societies, whose steady expansion may be explained by the important fact that they offer their members the opportunity to excavate.

The suggested solution would be that a new member of a local archaeological group would automatically become a member of the Association. The membership fee of the society would have to be higher, though not as high as the double fees which many now pay, and a tithe of this would go to the Association, which would benefit from some of the economies which derive from large numbers, at the present estimated to be about a thousand in all.

Clearly there would be a number of difficulties to be overcome, but this would seem to be the only practicable solution to what is really a somewhat anomalous situation of a national body which is no larger than some of its constituent parts, but which is being steadily required to take on the responsibilities of a centralized organisation.

Reference may also be made to the views expressed by several members on the objective of archaeological research in New Zealand. It is the wholly admirable opinion of some that archaeology should be carried out to "help the Maori": leaving aside the questions of how to interpret the feelings of a group or the form in which the Maoris may expect such help, it is fair to point out that this is a fundamentally personal objective, however important it may in fact be. The subject of archaeology itself is guided by more abstract principles, the essentially impersonal ones of scientific investigation.

In conclusion, before expressing thanks to the various people and bodies who made this conference run so well, it might be appropriate to offer a little advice for future organization. Quite a number of the members found the programme a bit too intensive and exhausting. On two days the papers covered over twelve hours, ending with discussions going on long after ten at night. This indicates the level of enthusiasm, but taxed the attention. Mr Rigby Allan and the Taranaki Museum Board are to be warmly thanked for their kind hospitality, including a delicious buffet lunch, and for the excellent facilities which they put at the disposal of the Association. Mr Allan is to be particularly thanked for his tireless interest and his many kindnesses including taking members round the collections. Lastly, the programme organizers, Miss Davidson and Mr Groube, must be thanked for their creation of so successful a programme.

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#### FORTIFICATIONS IN OTHER PARTS OF TROPICAL POLYNESIA

R. C. Green  
Bernice P. Bishop Museum

In a classic monograph on the Pa Maori published in 1927, Elsdon Best, having completed an analysis of Maori fortifications, went on to make a brief survey of what was then known of fortifications in Polynesia, Melanesia, Micronesia and Indonesia. His purpose was to determine possible origins for Maori techniques of fortification by an examination of the distribution of similar constructions in the immediately adjacent areas of the Pacific as he felt those of the Maori probably did not originate in New Zealand. In a conference devoted to the study of fortification in New Zealand, this purpose would seem equally germane and therefore constitutes the focus of this paper although in scope I shall limit myself to fortifications in Polynesia including Fiji.