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NEW ZEALAND ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER



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WAIONEKE 1968-69

J. R. McKinlay

INTRODUCTION

This excavation, which was directed by Mr L. M. Groube, was carried out December 1968 - January 1969 by the University of Auckland Archaeological Society. The aims of the investigation were (1) to examine the structure of one of the 'ring ditch' pa typical of the Kaipara region, and (2) to obtain such evidence as remained as to the function and use of such a field structure.

DESCRIPTION OF AREA

Waioneke is situated some 13 miles north of Parakai on the inner side of the southern peninsula of the Kaipara Harbour. It was on this peninsula that the initial field testing of the N.Z.A.A. Site Recording Scheme was carried out by members of the Auckland University Archaeological Society. The area is characterized by over 100 major pa sites, many occurring in clusters around areas formerly providing easy access to the food resources of the harbour or to more easily cultivable land, although this former relationship has often been masked by recent farming practices, including the reclamation of estuarine tidal flats. The pa chosen for excavation is one of a cluster of 7-8 around the former tidal inlet at Waioneke. No evidence was available for the former name or occupants of the pa, and because of this it is known by the name of the district.

Prominent dune complexes together with underlying fluvial and coastal pliocene sediments shelter the Kaipara Harbour on its western side, and it is on a small headland of this older material, jutting into the former tidal embayment, that the pa had been constructed. It is obvious that formerly this site would have provided its occupants with easy access to the sources of the bony fish and elasmobranchs to be found in the Kaipara Harbour, and to the rich faunal resources of the intertidal mudflats. The additional food resources of the sandy West Coast beach were also utilized, as were the avifauna. The peninsula itself is lacking in harder rocks for adze and stone tool manufacture - greywacke, argillite and chert - but these rocks are

obtainable from the older sediments to be found on the opposite side of the harbour, while obsidian was apparently obtainable from several sources.

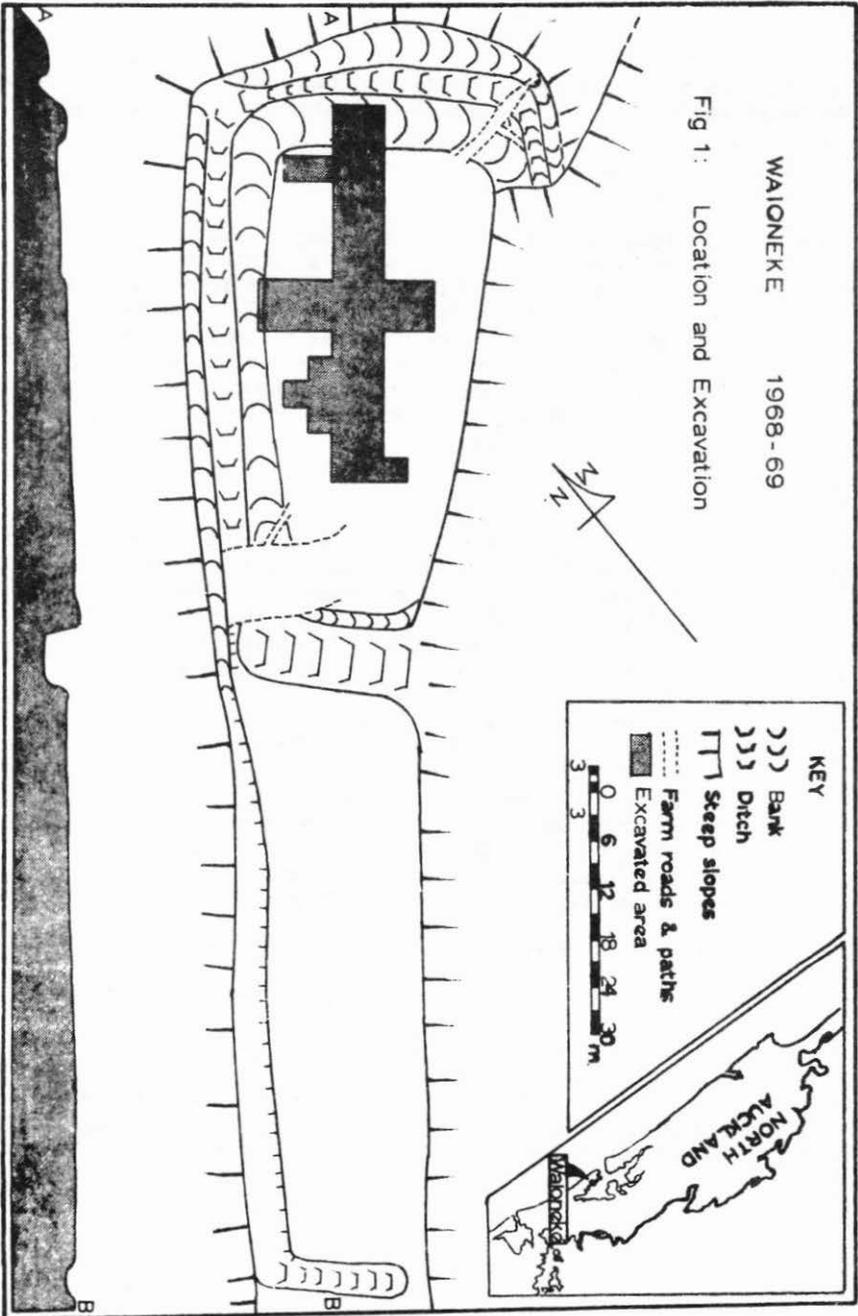
DESCRIPTION OF SITE

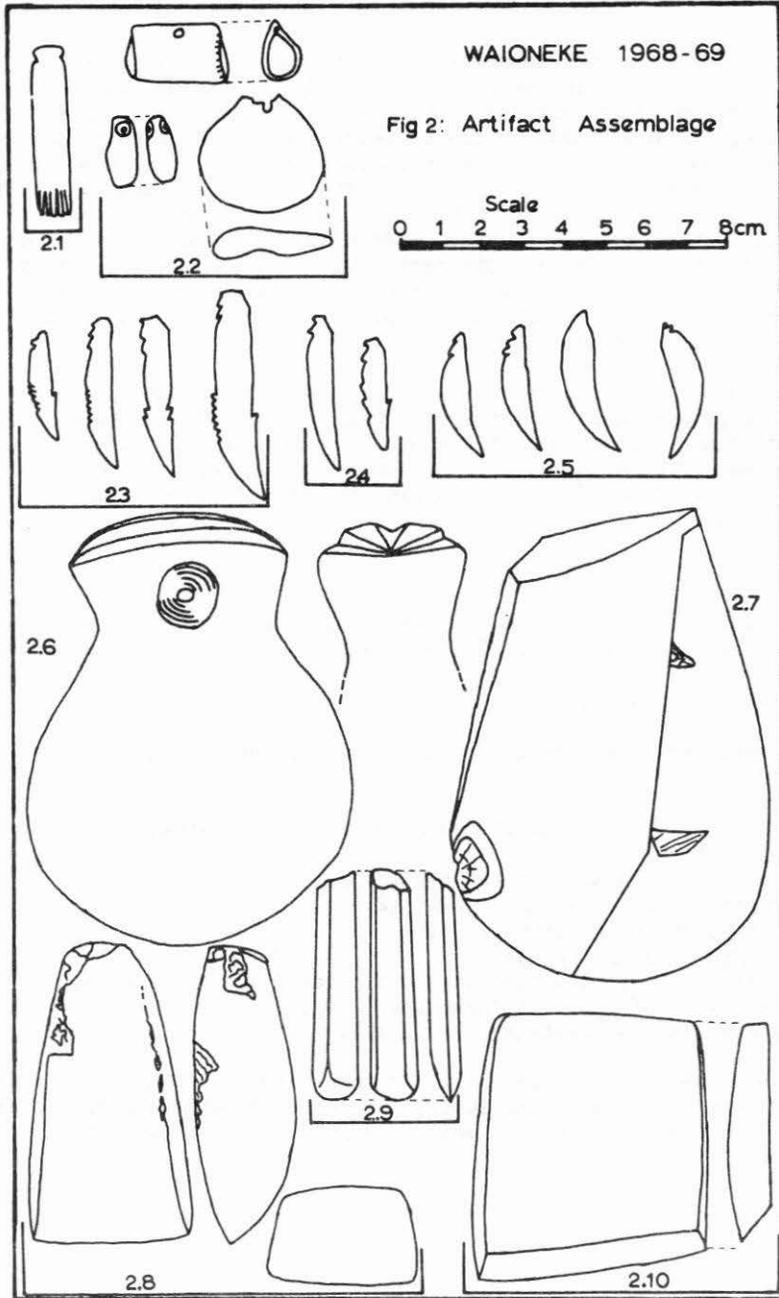
The more obvious field structure is a roughly rectangular (30 x 60 m.) area enclosed on three sides by a substantial ditch and bank system abutting on to the steep 50 foot cliff which formerly faced the tidal inlet to the south of the site. It seems clear, however, that this is a much reduced section of the original enclosure, the boundary of which may be traced in the much less prominent ditch extending to the south-west along the headland from the main earthworks. In addition, evidence of the former occupation can be found on the lower flat area to the north-east of the main site.

THE EXCAVATION

The excavation consisted of two double lines of three metre squares placed so as to give the two principal cross-sections of the main unit of the site. Where necessary to follow structural features, additional squares were opened (see Fig. 1). It was found that the topography of the site had been considerably modified by successive stages of occupation, for which the following sequence is suggested:

- (1) Initially, a series of large rectangular pits were dug into the sandy material of the hill. Several of these pits seem to have been contemporary, or at least consecutive structures, because of their consistent alignment. None produced any evidence of living, such as fireplaces, and all appeared to have been deliberately filled following use with debris produced from the digging of later pits. At this initial period the hill appears to have been undefended, or at least defended by only a minor ditch and bank.
- (2) At a later point in time the first of a series of major ditch and bank defences seems to have been constructed on the surface of the hill which had by this time been considerably modified by the movement of material, and the addition of occupation debris. It appeared that palisade posts had first been placed in position and then debris from the ditch heaped against them. At this time further pits were constructed inside the enclosure and occupation debris and loose soil deposited in layers on the inside against the palisades to gradually level and raise the surface of the site.





- (3) Still later, much more massive ditch and bank defences appear to have been built, with the palisade placed just inside the former line, and the ditch cut back into the former banks, thus again reducing the total area. The palisade seems to have been renewed or replaced from time to time as occupation debris continued to build up against it on the inside. At this stage, occupation of the site was intensive and total, and almost the entire area was blanketed with a dense layer of midden and hangi debris. No pits seem to have been dug at this period but evidence of two shallow structures was found. Unfortunately, post-holes were impossible to detect in this occupation debris. A wide range of artifacts were found in period 2 and 3 layers.
- (4) Just inside the palisade on the north-west side of the site, two shallow graves each containing one body were found, dug through the midden deposit and refilled by it. Both individuals had suffered severe head wounds. Perhaps this evidence indicates the ultimate fate of the pa and explains why it was eventually abandoned.

ARTIFACTS

(See Fig. 2). These were, in the main, associated with periods 2 and 3, and comprise a typical "late Classic" assemblage, consisting of:

- (a) two tattoo chisels (2.1);
- (b) an ornamented toggle of bird bone and two pendant ornaments of bone and ivory (2.2);
- (c) fish hook points - manufactured from slivers of mammal (dog?) bone (2.3);
fish spines (2.4) and dog canines (2.5);
a perforated stone fishing sinker (2.6);
a broken stone patu blade (2.7);
three type 2B adzes (2.8);
a chisel made from a broken adze and several adze fragments;
a broken greenstone chisel/ornament (2.9);
and a much-used greenstone adze (2.10).

Also recovered were many pieces of grindstones and sandstone files and cutters, flakes of obsidian and chert, fragments of worked bone, and flakes of chert and obsidian. No artifacts of European origin were found.

DATES

C.14 samples have been submitted to the Canberra laboratory and results are anticipated shortly. On the evidence it would seem that a date not later than late 18th to early 19th Century could be expected for the final occupation, with an initial date perhaps as much as 200 years earlier, although the total temporal span of the site may be much less than this.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

1. No report on this excavation would be complete without the expression of grateful thanks to Messrs C. C. and F. H. Lupton, the land owners, whose permission and assistance made the excavation possible.
2. Equally, members of the Auckland Archaeological Society are thanked for their vast expenditure of time and labour and to them also is due an apology for the tardiness of even this sketchy report. A more detailed report is still promised - at some later date.

ADDENDUM

The results of the C.14 determinations of the three samples submitted to the Australian National University Laboratory have now been received (Groube, pers. com., 10.6.71). Sample ANU 760, part of a fragment of wood from within a post-hole sealed over by a layer of clay contemporaneous with the earliest ditch and bank defence, has given a result of 290 ± 95 B.P. This was stratigraphically the earliest sample recovered, although it may even so post-date the first use of the site (see above, p. 88). The two other samples submitted (ANU 761 and 762) gave results of 100 ± 85 B.P. and 75 ± 80 B.P. respectively. They were samples of charred twigs and flax from the debris which had been burned in one of the large period 2 pits (see above) during the levelling up and modification of the surface of the site prior to the construction of the final ditch and bank system, and which had been completely sealed over by debris resulting from the final period of occupation of the site.

Even though samples 761 and 762 are recent, the absence of European material would make the earlier section of their range an acceptable assessment for the terminal occupation of the site (i.e., c.1790-1820 A.D.). This also compresses the period between the construction of the final defences and the abandonment of the site following the conflict which resulted in the deaths of the two persons whose remains were discovered in excavation (see above). Sample 760 would seem to justify the earlier anticipation of a temporal span of some 200 years for the site, but, equally, the time span could have been as little as 100 years.