NEW ZEALAND ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION

NEW ZEALAND ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER

A FURTHER IMPORTANT SOURCE OF CHERT IN THE WAIRARAPA

I. W. Keyes

ABSTRACT

An occurrence of chert at the junction of the Pahaoa and Wainuioru Rivers was important in Wairarapa prehistory.

INTRODUCTION

Since presenting a list of significant Wairarapa exposures of chert that were probably known and utilized by the Maori (Keyes, 1970), a further important occurrence has been noted that is worthy of record. (The reference to this locality was kindly brought to my attention by Mr P. L. Barton, to whom I am most grateful.) The following extract is taken from page 38 of Sutherland (1947):

> "Further up the river, at the junction of the Pahaoa and the Wainuioru Rivers, there are large depots of flint rock. The natives here worked the flint into a size suitable for axes, etc. In recent years large mounds of flint chips have been found. This was apparently where they worked in years gone by."

Alexander Sutherland was the first European settler in the Pahaoa Valley and established his "Ngaipu Station" along the Pahaoa River in 1856. He noted (Sutherland, 1947: 38) the existence of a large pa at the mouth of the Pahaoa River and recorded the fact that the Maoris visited the Pahaoa Valley extensively in early times. Also the remains of a pa occurred on the Station property and was sited adjacent to a natural occurrence of kokowai (red ochre-hematite) exposed in nearby streams.

DISCUSSION

The occurrence of chert that Alexander Sutherland recorded exposed at the junction of the Pahaoa and Wainuioru Rivers (N.Z.M.S.1, N166, Grid Ref. 210250) is significant on several counts. It is an inland

exposure and to judge from the "large mounds of flint chips" that were seen last century was one that was locally important and extensively exploited. The Wairarapa localities reported earlier (Keyes, 1970) that yielded good chert exposures are all situated near the south-eastern coast associated with the hard creamy-white silicified limestone of the Mungaroa Formation. Rocks of this formation and their South Island equivalents (the Amuri and Amberley Limestones) particularly, as well as other sedimentary rocks of the same age (ranging from Upper Mata through Dannevirke to Lower Arnold Series - i.e., Upper Cretaceous to Eocene) found along the North Island east coast (and also in areas of Northland) contain the main deposits of bedded cherts known in New Zealand (Keyes, 1970: 130-1). The chert deposits at the Pahaoa-Wainuioru River junction are however associated with older rocks mapped by Eade (1966: 106-7) and Kingma (1967) as Taitai Sandstone (Lower Cretaceous). Cherts in these hard sandstones often occur with spilites and include a range of more red-coloured varieties. Other areas of Lower Cretaceous rocks in the Wairarapa (that also extend towards East Cape) may yield further exposures of cherts associated with submarine lavas that were important in local Maori prehistoric economy in addition to the better known bedded cherts found in rocks of younger age (i.e., Mungaroa Formation).

REFERENCES

Eade, J. V. 1966 Stratigraphy and Structure of the Mount Adams Area, Eastern Wairarapa. Trans. R. Soc. N.Z. Geol. 4 (4): 103-117.

Keyes, I. W. 1970 Wairarapa Chert Sources in New Zealand Prehistory. Newsl. N.Z. Archaeol. Assn, 13: 128-34.

Kingma, J. T. 1967 Sheet 12 Wellington (1st ed.), Geological Map of New Zealand 1: 250,000. N.Z. D.S.I.R.

Sutherland, A. 1947 The Sutherlands of Ngaipu. A. H. and A. W. Reed, Wellington, 141 pp.