



NEW ZEALAND  
ARCHAEOLOGICAL  
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**NEW ZEALAND ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER**



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AN ARCHAIC ADZE FROM INLAND NORTH ISLAND

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Te Kumu Station is situated some 10 miles west of Mangaweka in an area of the steeply dissected papa terrain which is so characteristic of the Central North Island hill country. Te Kumu is drained by tributaries of the Mangapapa River, which is itself part of the Turakina catchment. Remnant areas of the forest which once clothed these steep hills still survive, mainly in steep gullies, but the cleared hills are noteworthy for their covering of gaunt stumps and waste timbers from milling and land clearance. In 1971 the owner of the station, while working in an area above the Mangapapa River, (NZMS 1 N139:111062), made the fortuitous discovery of a large adze which had long remained hidden in a cavity of a stump of a large totara tree. The adze was brought to the writer's attention in 1973 but the stump where it was found has not been seen. No other Maori artefacts are known to have been found on the station, nor are any Maori trails or occupation sites known in the area.

Description

The terms used in this description are those suggested by Davidson (1961:6-10). The adze is made from a fine-grained metamorphosed argillite, of medium grey colour with extensive black veining, which is characteristic of the Nelson-D'urville Island area (Wall, 1974:37-43). It is 21.2cm in length, 5cm wide, and 4.9cm thick. Essentially it is of a trapezoidal-triangular cross-section with a flattened apex to the front, and it would generally conform to Type 4 in the Duff classification (Duff 1956:176-184). The apex is slightly hollowed, especially towards the butt, and its general plane is not quite parallel to that of the back. There is no noticeable differentiation for hafting, although the slope of the sides at the butt has been lessened to produce a slight reduction effect. This, together with an area of hammer dressing scars would have formed an effective lashing grip. The back of the adze shows no distinctive chin for the cutting bevel, following a slight but graceful 'S' curve from the poll, with a marked steepening towards the cutting edge, which is 1.6cm wide. The surface of the adze has been finely polished, although some major flake scars and areas of hammer dressing scars remain.

## Discussion

Finds of Archaic type adzes in the interior North Island, while not unique, (note, for example, similar finds at Tongariro (Taranaki Daily News 7 March 1970) and Kaimai (Bay of Plenty Times 10 May 1974), are sufficiently rare to be worthy of description and comment. As the present adze is an isolated find with no associated cultural material, it is not possible to determine the date at which it was hidden. However, there is no reason to suppose that this adze was placed in the totara stump cavity other than in prehistoric times, nor does it seem unreasonable to assume that it had not been accidentally lost, but had been deliberately placed and hidden in the base cavity of a tree, in the stump of which it was eventually found.

Law (1973:162) notes that: "The few (known) North Island inland Archaic sites can be best seen as the result of occasional visits from inhabitants of the coast, and we might suspect the Archaic economy was not viable permanently removed from the coast". If this viewpoint is tenable, and present evidence would tend to make it so, then speculation as to the motives for any early penetration of inland areas is in order. There appear to be several possibilities, including: discovery and exploration of new territory; movement either by water or overland between already occupied areas; and, exploitation of the economic resources of an otherwise little utilized area. Without excluding the possibility of the first two, it is the third option which appears to offer the most acceptable explanation of the present case. Bearing in mind the nature of the prehistoric vegetation of this area it would seem that the economic resource which was being exploited would have been either the forest avifauna or the forest itself. As such adzes were not part of the normal birding kit, and would not have been necessary for the gathering of berries, fruits or roots, it follows that the resource being utilized would have been the forest trees. As the narrow cutting edge of this adze would appear to preclude its use for the actual tree-felling, it seems likely that the adze was being used for the initial working of the felled log. The postulation of canoe manufacture does not seem to be unreasonable, particularly as the Mangapapa River itself would at times contain sufficient water to transport a partly-made canoe towards the coast. A fourth possibility to consider is that the adze was hidden deliberately in order to establish evidence of passage, exploitation, or occupation for land ownership purposes.

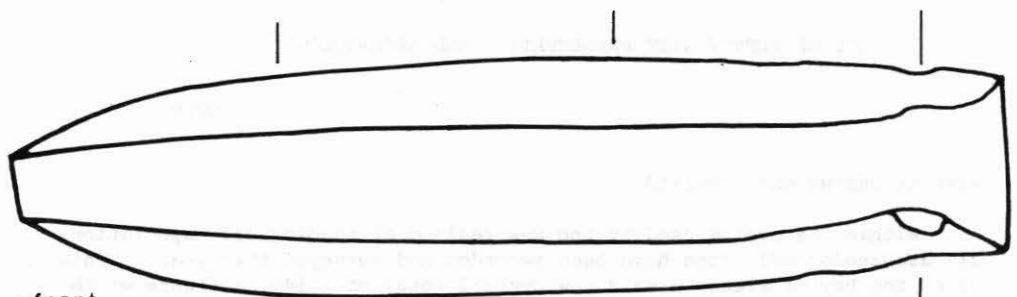
Whatever the actual circumstances of the placement of this adze, it is certain that the fortuitous nature of its discovery and the absence of associated or corroborative evidence will ensure that discussion can proceed only as far as speculation. The discovery does serve however, if such an adze may legitimately be taken to indicate both the Archaic phase of culture history in New Zealand and its considerable antiquity, to further document the utilization of the resources of the interior North Island by the early Polynesian inhabitants of New Zealand.

#### Acknowledgements

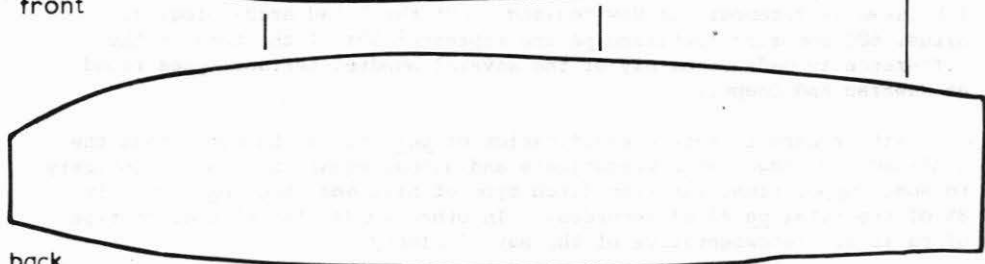
Thanks are due to Mr L. Schmidt, the owner of Te Kumu Station, for the opportunity to record and describe this adze.

#### REFERENCES

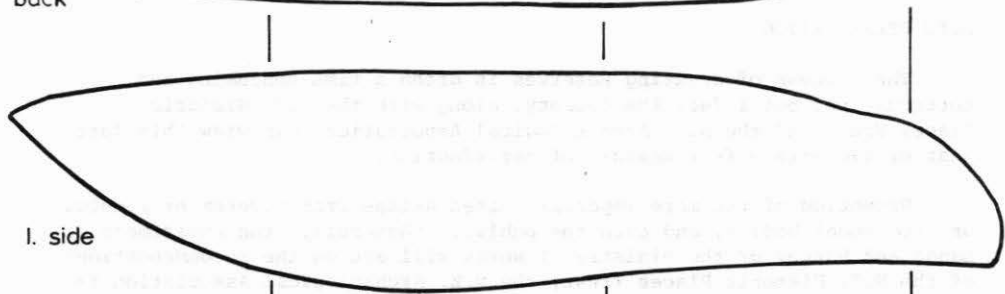
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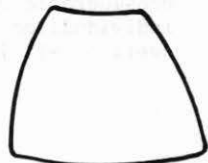
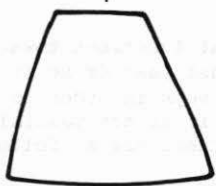
front



back



l. side



Adze from TE KUMU Station, HUNTERVILLE