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FIELD RESEARCH IN THE INLAND TARANAKI REGION

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ABSTRACT

The results of a site survey along the valley of the main tributary of the Patea River are presented. Previously no record of settlement was known in this remote area of inland Taranaki. From the site evidence and locally available rock material it appears that this region may have been an important area for the seasonal collection of artefact raw material by the coastal tribes of Taranaki.

INTRODUCTION

The coastal area of Taranaki has, since 1843, with the discovery of Moa bones at Ohawe by Rev. Richard Taylor (Taylor 1870, p. 414), been the subject of numerous publications on its prehistoric occupation. Notable research work on pa settlement patterns in more recent times has been conducted by Dr A. G. Buist (1964) and K. C. Gorbey (1970). Information on inland occupation is sparse. According to S. P. Smith, the valley system with which this paper is concerned falls within the boundary of the Ngati-Marū tribe. Smith (1910, p. 124) in discussing this tribe, states:

"Exclusive of a few clearings, the whole territory was forest-clad, and the surface somewhat broken, but nowhere do the hills rise to a greater elevation than 1,500 feet, whilst the general heights are much less. The Waitara River was navigable for light canoes with great difficulty, for some miles into the country, but it could never have been a highway except for the conveyance of heavy loads. There are not so many old pas in this district, as on coast, but nevertheless a few of some renown are to be found. The Ngati-Marū from the nature of their homes must have largely existed on birds, eels and other wild products and in pursuit of which their lives would resemble those of the old Tangata Whenua, from whom no doubt many of them descend. The tribe could never have been a very numerous one, and is now sadly reduced in numbers."

W. H. Skinner (1946: 72), in referring to the more remote parts of the Ngati Maru tribal area, writes in relation to their isolation:

"Consequently there were few fortified pas, only two being known to me. Keri Keringa, the tribal headquarters and Mangahau."

Both of these pa are on the Upper Waitara River, thirteen and eight miles respectively from the watershed boundary in Figure 1.

The present writer's interest in the area of inland Taranaki was first aroused by the number of artefacts in the possession of local residents. In view of the supposed lack of Maori occupation, this seemed strange. Certainly Rev. Richard Taylor in his accounts of two trips through the area between the Waitara and Upper Whanganui Rivers in 1844 and 1845 made no mention of any occupation (Meade 1966, pp. 54 and 74). It was therefore decided to undertake an intensive survey of a small part of Taranaki hill country to locate the type of occupation site that it seemed must exist.

Now over three years later an initial hypothesis can be offered to explain Maori occupation in this area, until now regarded as being largely deserted. It would appear that deep cutting river systems have eroded out and formed shingle banks of fine grained rock which have been utilized for the manufacture of adzes and flakes. The greater part of the coastal belt of Taranaki has little stone suitable for adze manufacture, most being of coarse grained volcanic rock easily worked into stone pounders but quite incapable of maintaining a sharp edge. However, it would appear from personal observation that a significant percentage of adzes found in the coastal belt could be made from the rocks common in the inland Taranaki area. Mr K. C. Gorbey (pers. comm.) has estimated that perhaps 2-3% of the located adzes in the collection of the Taranaki Museum are made from a very hard, fine grained and distinctly green coloured rock, which is one of the rock types found in the inland area. The Taranaki collection in the Auckland Museum has been personally viewed by the writer and it is his estimation that up to 50% of the adzes could have been originally quarried from this inland area of Taranaki.

Whatever the reason for the inland occupation, the early traditionalists appear to be quite incorrect in their assumption that there was little or no Maori occupation in inland Taranaki.

## GEOGRAPHICAL DESCRIPTION

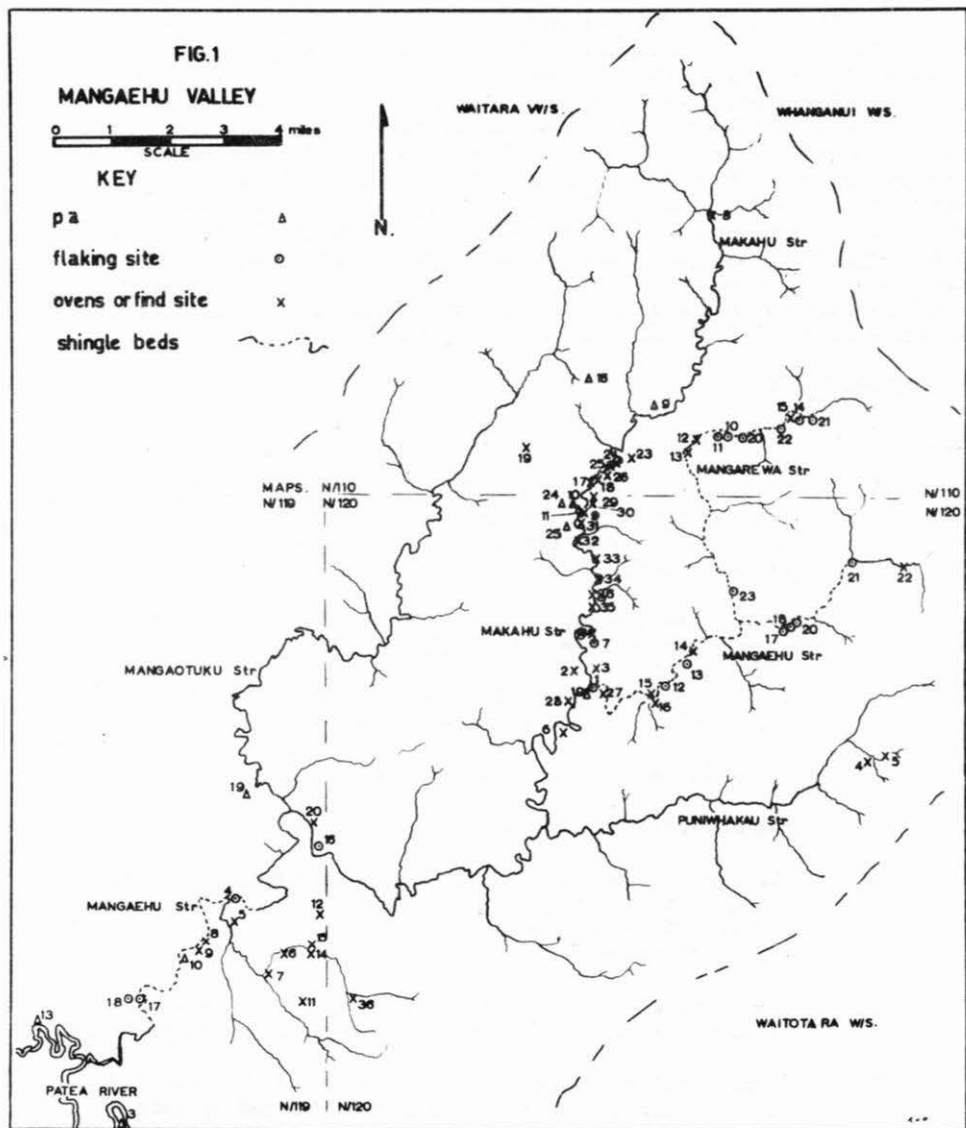
The hill country of inland Taranaki is composed of Late Tertiary sandstones and mudstones covered with Egmont ash. Where slopes are steeper than  $32^{\circ}$  the ash has been eroded off. The soil of the valley floors, developed on a mixture of Egmont ash and eroded sandstone and mudstone, is classified as yellow brown loam which is extremely fertile when not gleyed.

The actual survey area is located in the valleys of the Mangaehu, Makahu, Mangaotuku and Mangarewa Streams. The valley system is approximately 22 miles long on its north-east axis and a maximum of 10 miles wide. In the accompanying map (Figure 1) the neighbouring watersheds are marked to give some idea of geographical setting, and location of shingle banks are shown.

Under Cumberland's 1780 regional division of New Zealand, inland Taranaki falls within Waenganui, an area generally not suitable for the growing of tropical root crops (Cumberland 1949). Local residents claim that no month can be guaranteed frost free. Frosts in winter average 11 to  $14^{\circ}$ F. on the valley floors. Ward and Hocking (1956: 160) describe the climate as being "mild and equable though frosts occur in late autumn and in winter, and the mean temperature is near  $53^{\circ}$ F. Rainfall is high, probably between 70 and 80 inches yearly, and is well distributed (150 to 175 rain days), though it is slightly heavier in winter than in any other season."

Kumera has been grown above the valley floor but not with any great success. However, fern growth in this area is the fastest encountered by the present Forest Ranger at Te Wera (T. Muir, pers. comm.). (Most of the area above the boundary N110/N120 and bordered by the Makahu Stream on the east is part of Te Wera State Forest.) This fast-growing rhizome, as at Ngareto (Shawcross 1968: 23), must have been a significant food resource in the environment.

The pre-European vegetation included, on the wet valley bottom alluvial soils, Kahikatea (*Podocarpus dacrydioides*), Pukatea (*Laurelia novae zelandiae*), rushes (*Cladium - teretifolium*) and Raupo (*Typha Muelleri*); on the volcanic ash and mudstone Tawa (*Meilschmidia tawa*), Miro (*Podocarpus ferrugineus*), Rimu (*Dacrydium cupressinum*) and Totara (*Podocarpus totara*); and on the sandstone, Black Beech (*Nothofagus solandri*) and Tawhero (*Weinmannia silvicola*).



The valleys can be divided on the basis of their geomorphology into those that are wide floored and well drained and those that are predominantly swampy or steep-sided. Among the wide floored - well drained valley types comes the lower Makahu, the Mangaehu between its junctions with the Makahu and Mangarewa Streams and the Mangaehu again from the Mangaotuku Junction to the Patea River. The remainder of the valleys are generally inhospitable to settlement, being either swampy or narrow and steep. The upper Mangaehu and Mangarewa Streams fall into this latter category, but here also occur single beds. (See Fig. 1) Their composition may generally be stated to be river boulders of grey well indurated, sometimes silicified, coarse and fine grained siltstones, sandstone, and chipwackes; greenish mudstone and cherty argillites, all agree with artefact lithologies (I. W. Keyes pers. comm.).

#### SITE DISTRIBUTION

##### Map 110/8

Ovens exposed by fenceline work.

- /9 Single platform ridge pa. Defended on north by scarp-ditch and scarp, and on south by series of scarps and small terraces. Approximately 200 yards by 6-10 yards.
- /10 Flaking site/ovens. Covers extensive area of flat; across stream from site N110/11.
- /11 Flaking site/ovens. Surface collection 2 hammerstones, 1 possible adze blank and waste flakes.
- /12 Oven stones exposed on top of knob.
- /13 Ovens exposed by tracking.
- /14 Flaking site/ovens. On small flat between gorge and hill. Disturbed by logging operations. Surface finds: several flakes of obsidian, largest 2" x 3" and waste flakes of stone.
- /15 Ovens exposed by logging operations. Could have been flaking site but destroyed completely before inspected.
- /16 Single unit ridge pa. Natural defences on three sides. Double ditch and bank at south end, crossed by narrow causeway. Approximately 120 yards by 6-15 yards.

- Map 110/17 Ovens, covering extensive area. A cache of approximately 12 adze blanks picked up in one spot by farmer during cultivation.
- /18 Extensive ovens: Divided by small stream from N110/17.
- /19 Pit/ovens: Size of pit approximately 16' x 15' x 3'. Oven stones exposed in track below this pit.
- /20 Flaking site/ovens: Exposed by tracking in gorge. One core and waste flakes collected.
- /21 Flaking site/ovens: Small flat above gorge exposed by pig rooting. Ninety-two flakes, adze blanks and cores recovered by surface collection. All adze blanks in early roughout stage.
- /22 Flaking site/ovens: Exposed by tracking in gorge. Large piece of stone with flake scars and flakes collected.
- /23 Small knob with evidence of terracing, partly destroyed by tracking.
- /24 Ovens exposed by tracking.
- /25 Ovens/flaking site? Exposed by tracking. One small flake of indurated mudstone (green) and one quartz pebble with hammer marks on it collected.
- /26 Ovens exposed by tracking.
- N119 /3 Ridge Pa recorded by A. G. Buist. Destroyed.
- /4 Flaking site/ovens. One adze blank and hammerstone found during cultivation. Also from this area three untanged adzes of local stone were found, now in Taranaki Museum.
- /5 Ovens. Cover extensive area.
- /6 Find site, one grinding stone.
- /7 Find site, probable large adze blank.
- /8 Oven exposed by fence line.

- N119 /9 Oven exposed by stock.
- /10 Knob Pa, completely destroyed. Ovens on flat below.
- /11 Find site, of adze blank.
- /12 Find site/oven. Exposed by tracking. Broken adze blank probably broken by bulldozer.
- /13 Single platform ridge Pa: bank-ditch and scarp on east and west. North and south sides sheer; approximately 18 yds x 5 yds. Flat to west of this site has depressions which could have been whare sites. Oven stones picked up here.
- /14 Ovens exposed by bulldozing.
- /15 Ovens exposed by bulldozing.
- /16 Flaking site/ovens. Many unburnt stones exposed during ploughing. One extremely worn hammerstone recovered.
- /17 Flaking site/ovens. Hammerstone recovered during ploughing. Many unburnt broken stones noted by farmer.
- /18 Flaking site/ovens. Flakes of quartz and small adze blank picked up during cultivation by farmer.
- /19 Single unit peninsula pa. Defended on north-east, south-east and west by scarps and terraces. Partially damaged by fenceline and track.
- /20 Find site. Flake of obsidian exposed by stock, approximately 3" x 2" found by farmer. Since lost.
- N120 /1 Flaking site. Surface finds and large amount of waste flakes, one broken adze, possible three adze blanks, two pieces of one patu, hammerstone and three cores.
- /2 Single oven on ridge top.
- /3 Find site of adze blank.
- /4 Roughly square depression, ovens discovered in area by farmer.

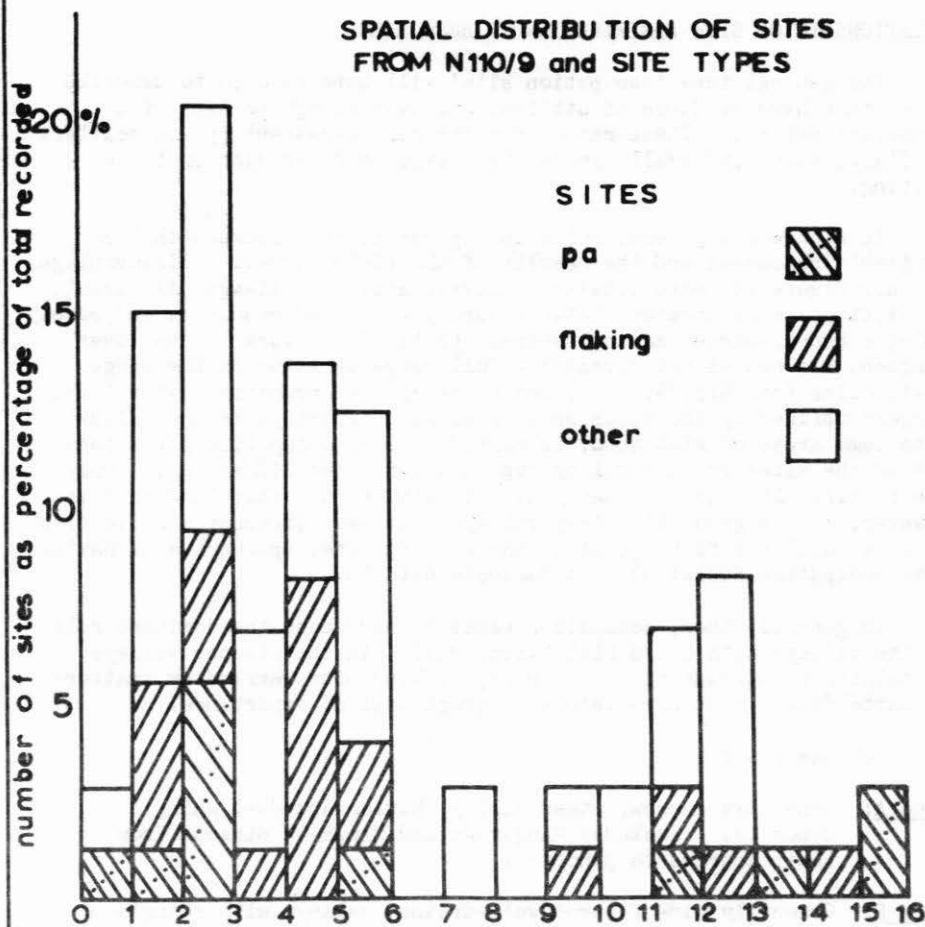


- N120 /5 Roughly square depression, ovens discovered in locality by farmer.
- /6 Single oven on spur. Flat below had several ovens discovered by farmer during cultivation.
- /7 Flaking site. According to farmer this area was covered in stones when ploughed. One large stone not ploughed under is a stone anvil.
- /8 Find site of adze untanged polished blade, butt hammer-dressed.
- /9 Extensive ovens, on knob. One small waste flake of indurated mudstone found.
- /10 Single unit ridge pa. Defended by ditch and bank at east end, scarp on west side - naturally sheer drop on north and south sides. Approximately 30 yards by 4 yards.
- /11 Single unit ridge pa. Defended by scarp on east and south sides with some evidence of ditch on east side. West side defended by bank - ditch - scarp. North naturally sheer.
- /12 Flaking site/ovens on knob, recently disced when visited by writer. Surface collection of waste flakes, two adze blanks, both broken. Some small flakes with secondary flaking.
- /13 Flaking site/ovens. Knob cultivated. Waste flakes collected. Large amount of oven stones visible.
- /14 Find site/ovens. Scattered ovens. One complete untanged adze found during cultivation.
- /15 Small area of burnt stone. Cultivated.
- /16 Extensive area of burnt stone and ground. Extends at least one chain back from stream bank into paddock.
- /17 Flaking site/ovens, in gorge. Disturbed by roading. Surface collection: possible adze, blank and flakes.

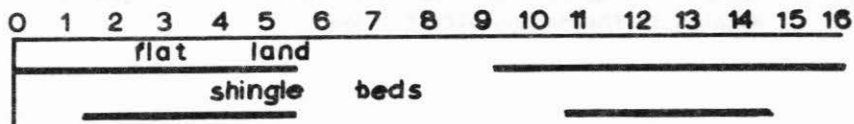
- N120 /18 Flaking site/ovens, in gorge. Disturbed by roading.  
Surface collection: possible pebble chopper and flakes.
- /19 Island Pa at junction Mangaehu and Makahu streams.  
Some evidence of terracing. Naturally sheer slopes all  
around. Small flake of indurated mudstone recovered.  
End of upper shingle beds. Pa covered in bush and scrub.
- /20 Flaking site/ovens, in gorge. Extensively disturbed by  
roading. Surface collection of flakes.
- /21 Flaking site/ovens, in gorge. Disturbed by roading.  
Surface collection of flakes. Upper extremity of  
shingle beds.
- /22 Scattered ovens on flat ground above gorge.
- /23 Ovens/flaking area, on small flat. Large stone found  
with flake scars and scattered ovenstones.
- /24 Single platform ridge pa. Triangular in shape.  
Defended by bank - ditch - scarp on south, scarp on east  
and artificial narrowing and scarp on west. Size  
approximately 50' x 50' x 50' all sides sheer.
- /25 Single platform ridge pa. Defended by bank - ditch -  
scarp on west side and ditch and scarp with central  
causeway at east end. Divided into two levels by  
natural scarp between tihi and terrace to the east.  
Approximately 50 yards by 4-6 yards wide.
- /26 Ovens exposed by tracking.
- /27 Find site of adze blank.
- /28 Find site of two adze blanks, one broken.
- /29-36 Oven sites exposed by tracking.

FIG. 2

SPATIAL DISTRIBUTION OF SITES  
FROM N110/9 and SITE TYPES



— radius in miles from N 110/9 —



AVAILABILITY of FLAT LAND and SHINGLE  
RESOURCES in MILES FROM N 110/9

24

## RELATIONSHIP OF SITE DISTRIBUTION TO RESOURCES

The general term 'occupation site' will here be used to describe sites that have evidence of utilization, even though perhaps of a transient nature. These range from the more permanent pa, to scatters of flaked stone and small single ovens exposed by erosion or track cutting.

In Figure 2 a general relationship can be seen between that of available resources and the results of the field survey. Disadvantages of this figure for more detailed analysis are: as mileage is direct, no distinction is apparent between purely flat-land resources and purely shingle bed resources in the northern part; field work in the lower Mangaehu has not as yet revealed a full range of sites in the range 13-16 miles from N110/9. The dominance of the occupation sites (here largely defined by the occurrence of cooking activity) in the valleys with some areas of flat land, is marked. Such occupation sites form 73% of the sites in this valley type and a further 21% are pa. Only one flaking site can reasonably be allocated to the flat land valleys. However, in the generally steep valleys that have abundant shingle beds of rock ideal for flaking, it is the flaking sites (perhaps also having some occupation function) that dominate with 73%.

In general, then, occupation seems to have been the dominant role of the valleys with broad flat bases, whilst in the steeper valleys containing high grade rock resources, flaking sites marked by scatters of waste flakes must have assumed a great deal of importance.

To summarise:

- Zone A: Generally narrow, steep valleys having abundant shingle deposits. Includes Mangarewa and Mangaehu Streams from their sources to junction.
- Zone B: Generally wide floored well-drained valleys with shingle deposits. Includes Mangaehu Stream between Makahu and Mangarewa Streams and Mangaehu from Mangaotuku junction to the Patea River.
- Zone C: Generally wide floored, well drained with no shingle deposits. Relates to the Makahu Stream only.

Flaking sites as to all occupation sites:

Zone A:	11 flaking sites in 15 sites	-	73%
Zone B:	7 flaking sites in 22 sites	-	32%
Zone C:	<u>1</u> flaking site in <u>26</u> sites	-	4%
	<u>19</u> flaking sites in <u>63</u> sites		

It is apparent from the above figures that the major importance of Zone A was the quarrying of stone material, whilst Zone C was the site of the more permanent occupation. Zone B, where the flat land and the stone resources are closely associated has a more balanced relationship between the two.

Pa sites represent 15% of the total recorded sites. The pa were mostly ridge type, defences varying from single scarps to double ditch and bank. Lateral defences depended on the steep ridge sides. No pits were observed. Sites are generally small and generally single unit, the largest being smaller than the largest of the north Taranaki hill country single unit pa described by Buist (1964) in a similar topographical situation. This suggests that this area supported a smaller population.

Further fieldwork will, I believe, concern this hypothesis: that the different valley forms supported different proportions of the site types used in this paper, largely because of the availability of different resources for utilization.

The survey, incomplete though it is, suggests other possibilities. The large number of finds of adze blanks, many broken, when compared with the comparatively rare completed adze finds suggests that the flaking industry of this survey area was orientated towards the manufacture of incomplete adzes.

Further, it would appear that in the Mangarewa Valley the flakes and adze blanks are very large and crude in the upper sites (N110/14 and 21) and become progressively finer and more finished downstream towards N110/11. This might suggest that rock was being transported in a partly shaped form from the very steep upper stream area, downstream to where more flat land was available and only then was the finer flaking and hammer-dressing undertaken. This possibility is strengthened by the finds of small indurated mudstone flakes at sites N110/25 and N120/9, and the cache of adze blanks at N110/17; only a short distance across the ridge from the Mangarewa shingle deposits.

#### FURTHER WORK AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR TARANAKI PRE-HISTORY

There appears to have been very little work done in the large areas of the rugged inland hill country of the North Island with which this study can be compared. However, this Mangaehu Valley is part of the huge block of sedimentary deposits stretching from Mokau in the north to the Whanganui in the south, and so the stone resources considered in this paper could be expected in other parts of the Taranaki hill country. Certainly semi-finished artefacts from the Upper Waitara River in the possession of the author are rendered in stones visually identical with the rocks from this survey area. Therefore the survey area is unlikely to be unique and further survey work in other parts of the Taranaki hill country should reveal similar distribution patterns.

The present writer is no longer resident in Taranaki and his work in this area is now at an end. Survey conditions are extremely difficult. The terrain is very rugged and vegetation cover is largely bush, limiting the use of aerial photograph searches. All surveying involves much tramping in inhospitable country which involved the present writer in unplanned overnight stops in the bush. However, even though on an average less than one site was located for each day spent in the field, the results have been very rewarding and the survey could profitably be continued by any interested archaeologist. To this end the following discussion is added to suggest approaches to the question of the occupation and utilization of this inland area.

In view of the number of stone artefacts found in the coastal belt that could have had an inland origin, strong cultural ties between inland and coastal Maoris can be inferred. The nature of these ties, once the artefactual link has been fully established, could be the subject of research. On the question of seasonality, a comparison with the inland South Island quarrying sites can be made. Lockerbie (1959) believes that occupation of these sites was of a seasonal nature only, based primarily on climatic considerations. However, Leach (1969, p. 70) argues for a degree of permanency of occupation based on the cultural material from the inland sites and the availability of good quality flaking stone being available on the coast as important factors against a seasonal migration from the coast to interior to quarry stone. It is possible, then, that artefactual material from this inland area of Taranaki either was carried out by a seasonal quarrying party, or it was traded by a local permanent population who were primarily concerned with quarrying this material. The evidence favours the first possibility, although further research will be necessary.

The lack of recorded information concerning this inland area suggests that the importance of the stone resource could have declined with the introduction of the steel axe leading to its abandonment early in the protohistoric period.

The nature of this enquiry has been extremely limited and seems to pose more questions than it answers. However, it is to be hoped that in the not too distant future someone will once again take up the enquiry into the nature of Maori occupation of the Taranaki hill country. The artefactual material in my possession will be the subject of a further paper after analysis and comparison. The obsidian from site N110/14 is tentatively identified as being of Mayor Island origin.

#### ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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