



NEW ZEALAND
ARCHAEOLOGICAL
ASSOCIATION

NEW ZEALAND ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER



This document is made available by The New Zealand Archaeological Association under the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License.

To view a copy of this license, visit
<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/>.

SHORTER COMMUNICATIONS

1. NOTES ON A MIDDEN AND AN ADZE NEAR COROMANDEL

A re-deposited midden site abundant with oysters, mussels, pipis and cockles; associated with a broken adze showing most unusual and remarkable wear, is located along the peninsula of McGregor Bay, across from the "Bird Rocks" on the north side of Coromandel Harbour.

The midden was found at the mouth of a dry stream where the tide had cut the bank bank. Its appearance was that of the supposed "older period" middens. In any case, it differs strikingly from the other midden deposits nearby. Rock oysters (Crassostrea glomerata) were in large proportion, as were mussels (Perna canaliculus), although the latter of a much larger size than commonly found around the rocks today. The pipis (Amphidesma australe) and cockles (Chione stuchburi) were also numerous, the sizes ranging from very large individuals to smaller ones, but not "too small", giving the appearance of being "hand picked", and not gathered by some mass gathering technique.

I visited the site in late May 1967 and the distinctiveness of the midden with its large shells and oysters caused me to examine the site more closely. The layer containing the shells gave the impression that the primary deposition of the midden was nearby, and that I was merely looking at a portion which had been washed down. Also found was a broken adze, probably of Duff's type 1 or 2A, made of basalt. Even though the adze was not found in place and the surrounding midden was of a secondary nature, its presence with the midden is nonetheless of some interest. The remarkable feature of the adze was its peculiar battered sort of wear on the bit. As the drawing shows, the centre has been chipped back to form a crescent, and the cutting edge has been steeply battered back.

Further examination of the oyster shells revealed that many of the lower valves seemed to show a large surface of attachment area, that is, the area which is cemented to the substrate. After recalling my experience on board the Marine Department vessel "Tio", in which I worked a fortnight as an oyster picker and gained thereby a deep appreciation of how solid an oyster can attach itself to a rock, it appears to me that some of the specimens certainly look as though they must have been chipped off.

I suggest, therefore, that the adze was used as an oyster pick, and that it was perhaps not unusual for broken or defective adzes to be used in such a way. The adze is now in the Archaeology Department at the University of Auckland.

DAN WITTER