



NEW ZEALAND
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NEW ZEALAND ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER



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NOTES ON THE MERE POUNAMU

Asymmetrical convexity in the weapon, and the skull of a warrior who survived its thrust.

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The photograph of a Maori skull presenting evidence of survival for some years following severe facial injury was recently published in Man (Taylor, 1972). The skull appears to be that of a young warrior whose opponent had delivered a near fatal thrust with a mere.

The absence of evidence of crushed bone supports the belief that the wound was a 'horizontal' cut of such force that molar teeth were broken and dislodged. In order to show the thin blade and sharp edges of these weapons, accurate contours were made from several mere pounamu in the Grey Collection in the Auckland Museum. In presenting examples of these contours, in the paper referred to, attention was drawn to the difference in curvature on the two faces of the blade. Although this feature was apparent in a photograph, it can be convincingly demonstrated in an unbroken mere only by an accurate contour that corresponds to a transverse section of the blade. In the transverse contour presented, the line joining the termini (representing the side edges of the blade) clearly lies nearer to one face than to the other (Figure 1). It is hoped later to enlarge on this observation.

REFERENCE

- Taylor, R. M. S. 1972 "Maori Mortal Combat Weapon", Man,
Vol. 7, No. 1, March,
pp 141-145.

Legend to Figure 1

Outlines of a greenstone mere in the Grey Collection in the Auckland War Memorial Museum.

- a and b Profile and facial outlines respectively, traced from photographs.
- c and d Precision contours, made in the regions shown in broken outline in b, to show difference in convexity of opposite faces.

Orientation relative to outline b is as follows:

a and c, as seen from the left side; d, as seen from below.

