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Shorter Communications

A FILE MANUFACTURING TECHNIQUE

R. Garry Law

During examination of a surface collection from Harataonga Bay, Great Barrier Island, made during excavations on sites in the bay (Spring-Rice, 1963: 24), an artefact was noticed which appears to show the method of manufacture of parallel-sided stone files. The implement is shown in the figure. The original raw material would appear to have a flat pebble of local rhyolite. The top has been filed flat and smooth possibly after the removal of a previous file, while a second file is in the process of removal. This was being accomplished by pecking. An experiment on a similar piece of rock showed that sawing produced a much smoother surface and more consistently shaped groove than occurs on this item. The breaking of the blank and the parent pebble may have occurred in an attempt to snap off the file. Parallel-sided oval-sectioned files of similar materials occur in the adjacent site of N.30/5, together with drill points and fish-hooks in the process of manufacture. Apart from files, a good many flakes of this material were also recovered. Possibly some preliminary shaping of fileblanks was by flaking.

The material from this site and the majority of the surface collection from the bay is referable to Colson's Archaic, suggesting a similar position for this item.

This is to my knowledge the only example from New Zealand showing the method of manufacturing files, although these are common, particularly on sites where bone was worked. Suggs (1961: 119) has described the Marquesan method of manufacturing coral files by splitting segments from coral pebbles and abrading these on stones to the desired shape. Suggs implies his typology of Marquesan files based on plan shape is applicable to Hawaii and New Zealand (op. cit.: 120). Wilkes and Scarlett (1967: 203) find his typology adequate for files from Heaphy River, and Simmons (1967: 22) suggests analogies for Little Papanui. The presence of the same types made by different techniques in New Zealand would add some weight to Suggs' typology.

The final report on the sites in Harataonga Bay is now in active preparation.

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