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OBSIDIAN FROM EXCAVATIONS IN AUCKLAND AND HAWKE'S BAY

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Dr Bruce McFadgen with the late Graham McCallum has recently undertaken an examination by means of energy dispersive x-ray fluorescence in order to obtain further scientific evidence of the different sources of the material commonly used for cutting by Maori people in early times. This work is a development of previous studies by Roger Green (1962, 1964) and Graeme Ward (1973).

Specimens obtained from excavations on Mount Roskill in 1961 in Auckland Museum (Fox, 1980) and from Tiromoana pa, Te Awanga, in 1974-5 in the Hawke's Bay Museum (Fox, 1978) have been examined with the following provisional results:

<u>Mount Roskill (N42/11)</u>		<u>Tiromoana (N135/1)</u>	
Mayor Island	18 pieces	Mayor Island	6 pieces
Great Barrier	41 "	Taupo/Rotorua	15 "
Rotorua	2 "		
Huruiki	2 "		
Not identified	6 "		
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Total pieces	70		21

TABLE 1. Sources of Mount Roskill and Tiromoana obsidian

In addition Dr McFadgen kindly made a visual examination of the obsidian from Green's 1965-6 excavations of a palisaded enclosure at Maioro (N51/15), near Waiuku, South Auckland. Of 961 pieces, 387 were considered to have come from Mayor Island, 487 from Great Barrier Island and 87 were not located. The examination confirms that Great Barrier and Mayor Island were the principal sources in the Auckland region. Many of the Maioro specimens are very small trimming flakes, and the numbers are rather misleading. Very few pieces came from stratified deposits. At Mount Roskill one piece from Great Barrier came from the filling of the late Pit C; and from the surround of a hearth nearby there were four pieces from Mayor Island and three from Great Barrier (Fox, 1980:Figs 3 and 13). The main occupation of the site has been carbon-dated to A.D. 1430-1620, probably extending to A.D. 1700.

At Tiromoana no obsidian was obtained from the earliest deposits on Site II; one piece from Taupo came from the filling of Pit A with a carbon date of A.D. 1200. Three from Taupo - Rotorua were associated with the defences on Sites I and VII, whilst one

from Taupo and two from Mayor Island came from the houses in the extra-mural settlement on Sites I and X, presumed to be of late 18th century date (Fox, 1978:28-29). The amount of material is too small to be reliable, but it is interesting that Taupo - Rot-orua is indicated as the primary source for central Hawke's Bay.

References

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