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ASPECTS OF THE CULTURAL SUCCESSION IN CANTERBURY-
MARLBOROUGH WITH WIDER REFERENCE TO THE NEW ZEALAND
AREA.

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(Author's Note: The original Paper, prepared as the Chairman's Address for Section I, Anthropology, was read only in part on that occasion while much that was read was rendered immediately irrelevant in the light of other contributions to the Symposium. The following essay represents an attempt to summarize the contentions of the Congress Paper, with modifications in keeping with the Congress discussions, formal and informal.)

In keeping with the occasion of the Royal Society's Tenth Congress which celebrated the ninetieth anniversary of the founding of the Philosophical Institute of Canterbury in 1862, this first Paper in the Cultural Succession Symposium spent much of its 24 pages in a retrospect of earlier reconstructions, commencing with the pioneer attempt of the Institute's founder, Julius von Haast.

As a Geologist von Haast believed the moas had been exterminated in unspecified millenia before Christ, concluding from the prevalence of flake knives in the Rakaia mouth site in 1869 that their hunters were Palaeolithic Autochthones long preceding the Polynesian Maori and appropriately differentiated as Moa-Hunters. Recovery of a ground 2A adze from the Moa-hunter level of the Redcliffs Cave caused Haast to agree that the Moa-hunters were Neolithic, but he continued to regard them as ethnically distinct and separated by a wide time gap. To Haast's critics the human occupation of New Zealand commenced with the Hawaiki Fleet, whose first resident generations exterminated the moas.

From the comparative study of family trees and traditions Percy Smith assigned the Fleet Hawaiki to the Society Islands, regarding the migration (which he dated to 1350 A.D.) as the last of a series of Polynesian migrations commencing with Kupe's discovery (not followed by settlement) in 950 A.D. Probably under the influence of the Ethnographer Elsdon Best, Percy Smith subsequently subscribed to the theory that between the initial Polynesian discovery of 950 A.D. and the Toi migration of 1150 A.D. a landfall of a Melanesoid people called Maruiwi or Mouriri established the first tangata whenua, whose survivors fled to the South Island and the Chathams under pressure from the Toi Polynesians. Applying the criteria of comparative artifact typology from surface finds in the Chathams and from sustained excavations in Otago-Southland Skinner discredited the Maruiwi theory by demonstrating the strongly East Polynesian artifactual affiliations of assemblages from the Chathams and from early sites in the South Island. Skinner's Otago School did not however differentiate Maori culture into an earlier and later succession.

It was the Wairau Bar burials in 1939 which permitted the differentiation of the Maori cultural succession into an early phase associated with moa-hunting and a late phase associated with agriculture, warfare, cannibalism and the permanent village. The early phase, for which Haast's term Moa-hunter was revived "for want of a better" was best represented from the east coast of the South Island, the late (or Classic) phase from the North Island, whose climate was better suited to cultivation of the staple crop, kumara. The succession was based on the contrast between the North Island climax of the Classic Phase in the late eighteenth century, and the manifestation in South Island sites, presumed early because of the contemporaneity of the moa, of what was regarded as the ancestral culture phase distinguished by different artifactual assemblages and with an inferred absence of warfare and agriculture.

To the author this implied the late and local evolution of the Classic in the North, the suggested stimulus being the introduction of the kumara at a mid-point in the Polynesian occupation, coinciding with Maori traditions of a Fleet arrival in the fourteenth century. The alternative hypothesis that the Moa-hunter and Classic phases represented a contemporary and collateral development in the differing environments of the two islands was not favoured from the widespread existence in the North of distinctive artifacts, identical with those from the South Island Moa-hunter camps. The genesis of the Moa-hunter phase could thus be regarded as pre-Fleet, the Classic as post-Fleet.

In terms of artifactual assemblages the Moa-hunter phase exhibited adze, ornament and fish-hook types stylistically archaic in that they could be held to represent the persistence of Early East Polynesian fashions presumably dispersed from the Society Islands. By contrast the distinctive Classic artifacts could be referred to a late and local development.

This thesis stood the test of time until North Island excavators had their first experience of running into archaic artifactual assemblages not associated with the moa and surviving into the seventeenth century. Golson drew attention to the inadequacy of the term Moa-hunter to embrace both moa and post-moa assemblages of pre-Classic facies and sought for a more satisfactory alternative, proposing Archaic. Despite his failure to define Archaic precisely, his intention as I infer it, was to combine two different and incompatible meanings:- Archaic, meaning the persistence of Early East Polynesian artifactual fashions; and Archaic, meaning early or pre-Classic. Golson's Archaic embraced, at one end of the scale, artifactual assemblages in primary moa association, as at Opito and Sarah's Gully, at the other post-moa assemblages as at Motutapu, whose styles were regarded as a persistence of the former. The grounds on which Archaic was preferred to Moa-hunter were the contradictions involved in any attempt to apply Moa-hunter as a blanket term to include post-moa assemblages. In practice this had not been attempted, Moa-hunter being restricted to consistently repeated cultural assemblages in primary moa associations.

The content of these assemblages was marked by adze, ornament and fish-hook types representing the archaic persistence of Early East Polynesian fashions, but no less by artifacts and cultural traits with no demonstrable tropical Polynesian reference. Conversely archaic East Polynesian fashions persisted through every century of the South Island succession, influencing adze and fish-hook styles until European settlement.

Golson's Archaic offered at first glance an initial advantage over Moa-hunter. It could be used to wrap in one package both moa and post-moa assemblages bound by the common thread of artifacts which were stylistically Early East Polynesian. But strands of the same thread persisted throughout the Classic, less obtrusively in the North Island but still manifestly. The question raised in the Author's Paper was at what point did we decide that the survival of archaic styles no longer justifies reference to an Archaic phase?

This in brief was the question which Golson's loose use of the "Archaic phase" left open for debate at the Congress. Although the debate seemed to generate more heat than light, in retrospect it does resolve for the writer a major element of confusion. This is the contrast between the appropriate use of archaic as a stylistic term to describe artifacts of presumed Early East Polynesian origin, wherever found in the cultural succession, and the inappropriateness of transferring to any cultural phase as a whole a term resting on so limited a base as a factor of stylistic conservatism in its artifact fashions.

The attempt to lift archaic from the subordinate role of describing artifactual or linguistic styles to designating cultural phases in toto sets a most intriguing precedent for Polynesian pre-history where the early phase of the succession in each group would be archaic with reference to another. By the same logic with which the earliest New Zealand phase is designated archaic (East Polynesian), the earliest Tahitian phase might be archaic (Austronesian), the earliest Cook Island archaic (Tahitian), the earliest Hawaiian and Mangarevan archaic (Marquessan), the earliest Chatham Islands archaic (New Zealand)!

Within tropical Polynesian groups such widespread use of archaic to designate the early phase would be subject to the chief objection of the need to nominate each use of archaic in terms of its presumed point of reference. The differences of environmental adaptation would be comparatively slight.

One cannot however imagine more profound changes in the culture and economy of the tropical East Polynesians than those involved in the settlement of temperate New Zealand. If agriculture were initially absent or, as is probable in terms of the assumption of a severance from the Society or Cook Islands in the seventh or eighth centuries, restricted to Southeast Asian plants of limited climatic tolerance, the moa and its contemporaries would have largely decided the trend of settlement and the centre of population gravity. Its bones enabled the "whale-tooth" and "reel" necklace units, formerly restricted

to ivory or shell, to take on new modifications. The conversion of bait and lure fish-hooks from pearl shell to moa bone, would involve new techniques which in turn modified traditional forms. Techniques of hunting and flesh preservation would be new, requiring also new implements for quartering moa carcasses and for flensing skins, notably large edge-struck flake choppers and edge-ground slate knives which need have no precedent in tropical Polynesia. The probable use of moa, dog and seal skin for clothes was reflected in bone awls and sewing needles with few Polynesian precedents. The value attached to water vessels converted from moa eggs, implies a substitute for tropical gourd, coconut or bamboo containers. The evidence of moa bones deliberately buried in graves as at Wairau, or placed at the base of post butts recently found in the Redcliffs Cave, implies a ritual magic connected with the moa chase. Of local inventions reflecting the new importance of the fowling economy the durable bird-spear point demonstrates the age of this technique at least. The unprecedented variety of stone materials enabled the imported adze styles to flourish and develop probable new varieties; offered serpentine, limestone and slate as a substitute for bone, shell and ivory; and encouraged a wide range of flake tools, cutters and abrasive files. A completely new range of cordage and textile substitutes had to be mastered. We may assume profound changes in house-types and in canoes, where, in the cold waters of New Zealand, the stage was set for the progressive loss of the outrigger float. In sum the only raw materials common to the two areas were basalt, whale-tooth ivory and timber, but from trees of different species. Only the language would remain independent of the challenge and restrictions of the new environment.

To designate this culture phase Archaic East Polynesian is to ignore the profound changes which the new environment imposed after the first settlement period, changes which ultimately issued as the Classic Maori phase. Archaic as a phase designation is moreover less effective than Moa-hunter in maintaining the polarity of differentiation between the beginning and the end of the process of local cultural evolution.

In preferring Moa-hunter to Archaic to designate the commencing phase of the cultural succession I do not imply a simple two-stage cultural evolution. I imply merely that if we wish to subdivide the intermediate segments of the line we must keep the cultural stratigraphy of the beginning and the end separate. The key to understanding whether the Classic emerged sui generis out of the pioneer East Polynesian culture, or was inspired by sporadic trait intrusion, of which a late introduction of Kumara seems to me the most plausible, is less likely to be found in the South Island than in the North. This emphasises the necessity of subdividing the early stage of the succession as precisely as possible. Here we see the inadequacy of blanket terms such as Archaic and Moa-hunter. In the light of Roger Green's submissions there were doubtless successive phases in the association of moa and men; a settlement phase where a full range of genera might be

expected in transient coastal camps; a later phase marked by large semi-permanent village stations; and an Experimental phase, where moas survived inland, forcing coastal communities to develop other resources, such as, in theory, agriculture. Green ushers in his Maori culture with Pa Maori, where the fortified habitation reflected the growing importance of agriculture. Finally Classic Macri represents the climax development.

Applying this scheme to the northern South Island I would tentatively propose the following succession: a Moa-hunter phase, 850 - 1350 A.D. (sub-divided into Settlement and Development sub-phases); a Transitional, 1350 - 1550 (sub-divided into Residual and Proto-Classic sub-phases); and a Classic 1550 - 1810.

As the least satisfactory of the proposed phase names Residual warrants further explanation, as below.

Following the extermination of the moa, the long established fishing and fowling economy would suffer a decline, in a zone where kumara cultivation could be at best subsidiary, and before the build up of nephrite exploitation which in the Classic phase sustained the Ngati Mamoe and Ngai Tahu economies. Residual seems therefore a more appropriate local phase name than Experimental. The earliest field evidence of kumara cultivation, in the dual form of heaped stone walls and borrow pits for mining gravel, seems associated with Ngai-Tahu sites of the eighteenth century. From the opening of the Transitional the cultural role of the South Island tangata whenua would seem increasingly passive. Any tendency for experimental modification of the indigenous culture was probably inhibited by successive occupation waves of the bearers of the emerging Classic phase from the North Island. South of Banks Peninsula the new influences declined progressively and older traditions of adze and fish-hook manufacture probably survived in a contemporary melange with Classic trait unit intrusion until European contact.

For the immigrant culture from which the succession stems I favour New Zealand Early East Polynesian. Should the influence of a subsequent East Polynesian migration be demonstrated at a later point in the succession, the earlier phase of the succession might be, as Jack Golson suggests, grouped under East Polynesian I with status as a sub-culture, the later under East Polynesian II. Finally as we are dealing with a Polynesian succession I follow Polynesian custom in regarding the retrospective passage of time as Ino, that is, from above downwards. The presumed succession is therefore represented diagrammatically as a family-tree, with separate North Island, South Island and Chathams manifestations.

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