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THE LOSS OF THE *ADVENTURE'S* CUTTER AND ITS AFTERMATH

IAN CHURCH

Introduction

While investigating the loss of the *Adventure's* cutter in December 1773 and its aftermath I became aware that a drilled pendant of blue and white china in the Otago Museum might not have been, as I had supposed, a relic of the first known sealers at Otago Harbour in 1810 (Church 2008: Plate VI, 467) but might have had a deeper significance (Figure 1). The path of discovery has been long and involved and I am hoping that archaeologists may be able to produce evidence to support or modify my reconstruction of events.

A drilled china pendant

This ornament, with a conically bored hole for hanging, was collected before the First World War in the vicinity of Whareakeake/Murdering Beach, and the adjacent Wharau-werawera/Long Beach, on the coast just west of the entrance to Otago Harbour, and is displayed in the Otago Museum. Two other fragments of similar pottery from the locality have been dated to 1810 and 1820-30 (Purdie in Church 2008: 117, Plate VII).

The following quote, from William Bailey Baker, 19 year old son of missionary Charles Baker and the Reverend Taylor's assistant from February 1848 to January 1850, provided a possible clue to the origin of the pendant:

A vessel came to Aropawa, and Rongotute was the name of the **chief** leader of that ship; and the crew of that ship were evil, and committed evil on the Māori people, so that the Māori people, being so annoyed and disgusted with them, and so enraged by the evil of their ways, attacked the ship, took her, and killed all the crew. These were cooked and eaten. This act was committed a long time before Te Rauparaha migrated to the south from Kawhia, to the Whanganui-a-tara...The Māori collected the ropes from the masts, and from the sails, and from the ship, and the ship was allowed to drift on the beach, where the various things on board were taken by the Māori and **the dinner plates were broken by the Māori and bored in the pieces, which**

were worn by the people instead of the greenstone hei-tiki. Now, the figures on some of these pieces of plate were not unlike Māori trees, and hence these imitation plate hei-tikis were called Te-upoko-o-rewarewa (the head of rewarewa) [*Knightsia excelsa*, also known as the New Zealand honeysuckle (Salmon, 1986: 54-5)], as the Māori thought the figures on the plates were like that Māori tree... But it was not long after these Europeans had been killed and eaten by the Māori that an epidemic came on all the district. This was a fever, and little punctures were on the body of the invalid, and thousands of Māori people died of this disease...

White, 1888: 120-121; Taylor, n.d.: 113. Emphasis added.

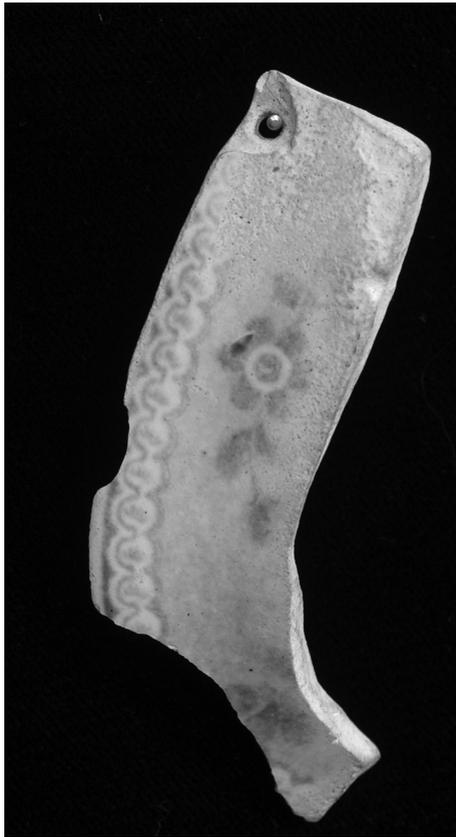


Figure 1. The china pendant (D32-718, Torrance Garfield Reid Collection; courtesy of the Otago Museum)

Historical background

Rongotute was Captain James Cook. Rongo was the god of fertility, or the bringer of good things, and the Tahitian interpreter Tupaia appears to have represented Cook as such (Salmond 2003: 74). Polynesians added a number of suffixes to Rongo to denote his various attributes, such as Rongo-ma-Tane, Rongo-maraeroa and Rongo-i-amo, so there was nothing unusual in the conjunction of Rongo and Tute (Anderson 1969: 422-429). The *Adventure*'s cutter is the only 'ship' that this can refer to, and it was from her destruction in Grass Cove, Queen Charlotte Sound, in December 1773 and the killing of her 10 crew that Māori dated the outbreak of an epidemic that decimated the population of the lower North Island and much of the South Island. This had a profound effect on the Māori inhabitants and New Zealand's subsequent history.

The *Adventure* visited New Zealand in 1773 and 1774. As in his first voyage in the *Endeavour*, Cook was largely successful in preventing the crew of the *Resolution* succumbing to the ravages of scurvy. But Lieutenant Tobias Furneaux of the sloop *Adventure* lacked his superior's firmness, for by the time she arrived in Queen Charlotte Sound in May 1773 "many of the men were debilitated and weakened by scurvy". On 28-29 July, as recorded in his log, Cook took the drastic step of admonishing his junior officer "for his inattention to the welfare of his sailors", and ordered him to use his authority to force his men to take vegetables and beer with their meals (Bown 2003: 149-151). Cook could not have foreseen the tragic outcome of his order for some of the *Adventure*'s crew.

During the two ships' stay in Queen Charlotte Sound, trading with Māori was generally carried on peacefully, but there were a few incidents when the local visitors were cowed by the firing of muskets or cannon, and these were blamed on people 'from the Northward'. There were several iwi in the area of whom Rangitane, originally from the Wairarapa, dominated the inner sound while Ngati Apa, from Rangitikei, controlled the outer reaches. Other iwi, such as Kāi Tahu, Ngai Tara and Ngati Kuri were also present, doubtless contending for the valuable exchange of southern greenstone, preserved muttonbirds, other preserved birds, kauru and inanga for northern obsidian and sub-tropical foods, which took place in the sheltered bays. This had helped to make the top of the South Island subject to constant invasions and inter-tribal rivalry.

Furneaux's men recovered with the abundant fresh celery and scurvy grass available in Queen Charlotte Sound (Figure 2). After they sailed for Tahiti the cook, Mortimer Mahoney, died on 23 July 1773, and some 20 men were sick, compared with only one in the *Resolution*. Although most of the shipboard accounts mention only scurvy, Furneaux wrote of other symptoms. When they

arrived at Tahiti on 18 August 1773 the sick were taken ashore each day and when the expedition sailed again six days later they were in good health.



Figure 2. Scurvy grass still grows in Wharehunga Bay. Courtesy of Jim Handly.

As such, it seems clear that Māori in Queen Charlotte Sound had been exposed to European disease. Despite the fact that the crews were generally healthy it was possible for a person to unknowingly carry the germs of typhoid, one of the killer diseases of the time for both Europeans and indigenous peoples. While the carrier could be free of any symptoms he could pass the disease on through faeces or by handling food with unwashed hands. Its symptoms included violent dysentery and spots.

Incident at Grass Cove

By mid-December 1773 Furneaux had become separated from Cook, and he took the *Adventure* back to the agreed rendezvous of Queen Charlotte Sound. Cook had left just six days earlier. Thefts and confrontations made relations with the local people uneasy from the start. Furneaux decided not to linger and, conscious of his orders, on 17 December he sent the ship's cutter

away with ten men to gather greens preparatory to sailing. These were among the best and most healthy seamen in the sloop.

According to Second Lieutenant James Burney's later reconstruction the party were "dining on the beach" at Grass Cove, now Wharehunga Bay (about 25 km north of Picton), on the western side of Arapawa [Arapaoa] Island, when

During their meal a Zealander stole something out of the Boat, and was making off with it, on which Mr Rowe fired and killed the Thief on the spot. The Zealanders immediately sallied out of the Woods and got between our people and the boat. They say Rowe fired twice and killed another man, but the people's muskets had been left in the boat, nobody but himself having any firearms, so that they were easily overpowered and fell from imagining themselves too secure...

McNab 1914b: 197-8

The local people blamed the killings on a party from the other side of Cook Strait, whose chief 'Kow-ura' [Kahura] killed Rowe with his own hand. Kahura gave his version of events to Cook on 17 February 1777. He said that the trouble began when a sailor refused to trade anything for a stone adze and its owner stole bread as payment. There was a scuffle and the thief was shot by Rowe. Furneaux's servant saw a man stealing a jacket from the cutter and attacked him with a stick; this Māori too was shot by Rowe. Kahura rallied his people to seize the sailors; some were killed outright, others later and the black servant last (Beaglehole 1967: 798-9, Mitchell 2004a: 162-169, Salmond 2003: 314).

When Rowe's party did not return trouble was not immediately suspected. It was thought the cutter might have been damaged and that her crew might have taken shelter in East Bay, but it was too late in the day to mount a search. The next day James Burney took the sloop's launch, with 10 marines, and sheets of tin to make any necessary repairs. Some of the people in East Bay appeared frightened and Burney gave one a looking glass and another a large nail. (This site was named Burneys Bay in 1971 by the New Zealand Geographic Board and a commemorative plaque placed on the site (Figure 3).)

On a small beach next to Grass Cove they found baskets full of roasted flesh and a broken oar. There was little doubt of what had happened to the cutter's crew, as the party recovered some shoes, issued just a day or two earlier, one of which was known to belong to Woodhouse, and a hand from Thomas Hill, "it being marked T.H. with an Otaheite tallow instrument." (Beaglehole 1961: 749-752, McNab 1909: 51-55).

In Grass Cove the Māoris were dispersed by musket fire. Burney and his men found the remains of the missing men. Peter Fannin, who was guarding the boat, called out that he could hear people shouting in the valley, perhaps

preparing to attack, so they gathered up some of the body parts, including Swilley's head and Rowe's hand, and hurried back to the launch. They destroyed three of the canoes on the beach and fired one last volley at a large crowd of people gathered on the hillside up the valley.



Figure 3. The Burneys Bay plaque. Courtesy of Jim Handly.

Burney's party left the cove in darkness, but though they searched again for the cutter, there was no sign of it apart from the broken oar and rowlock ports, and they were later told that a strong party from "Terrawhiti (the North side of Cooks Straits)", who had come over to Queen Charlotte Sound "to fight them and proving victorious carried the boat, firearms and everything that was found away with them" (Beaglehole 1967: 998-9).

The collected body parts were weighted down with ballast and shot and buried at sea off the entrance to the Sound. The victims' effects were auctioned, as was traditional, and the Adventure finally sailed off on 23 December 1773.

After leaving New Zealand Furneaux sailed to 56° South but failed to find Cook. He made for Cape Town, from where he reported to the Admiralty on 5 April 1774, writing that many of his men were ill with scurvy (Beaglehole

1961: 743, 745n, McNab, 1908a 18-19; Furneaux's list differs slightly from Burney's). The *Adventure* anchored at Spithead on 14 July 1774.

Cook returned to Ship Cove on 18 October 1774. It was six days before he met any Māoris and 10 days before he received accounts of a fight, or a stranding on the coast, which had taken place some time before. Some Māori suggested that the incident had occurred on the other side of the strait, or their attempt to lay the blame on people from the north side was misinterpreted as such (McNab, 1914a: 50-57, Salmond 2003: 228-31). On 6 November Cook was reassured that the *Adventure* had got safely away to sea, but he remained unaware of what had really happened until he reached Cape Town on 21 March 1775.

When Captain Benjamin Morrell of the sealing schooner *Antarctica* was off Cook Strait on 13 January 1830 he noted:

It was in a harbour within this strait that Vancouver [he means Furneaux] lost a boat's crew, upon whose bodies, it is generally supposed, that the natives feasted; but from the account I received from one of the chiefs on the north side of the strait [at Flat Point, Wairarapa, where they were visited by about 50 Māori], I am led to believe that the flesh was thrown away, and the bones worn as ornaments by the principal chiefs. Some of these bones converted to this use were still to be found among the tribes in this vicinity.

Morrell, 1832: 369

Rewharewha epidemic

When a great epidemic, known as *te upoko o te rewharewha*, swept through the country in the late 1700s Māori related it to the killing and eating of the crew of one of Rongotute's ships that was wrecked. S. Percy Smith, and both Edward Tregear and Elsdon Best, who shared information with him, wrote that the disease commenced its ravages at a time when the ship of Rongotute was cut off by Māoris, either in Queen Charlotte Sound or at Palliser Bay, and all on board were killed (Best 1904, Smith 1910a: 59, Tregear 1904). The alternative, and false, location, had appeared as early as 1774.

When Cook returned to Queen Charlotte Sound in October 1774 he made no comment on any disease or illness among the inhabitants. Nor did he refer to an outbreak of disease when he returned in 1777. But *rewharewha*, by one estimate, reduced the Māori population in the adjacent Wairau district from over 4,000 to about 800 (Elvy, in Mitchell 2007b: 471). Teoti (George) MacDonald, the chief of Wairau pā from the late 1890s was quoted as saying that they were formerly "a united and very numerous people, well-fed, strong and vigorous, immune from disease with the one exception of a virulent outbreak of what is supposed to have been a very bad form of influenza or dengue

fever...This ‘plague’, for such was its virulence, is known to the Natives by the name Rewharewha, and appears to have swept from one end of New Zealand to the other. Very few of the natives at the Wairau survived...”. However, MacDonald’s account was corrupted by later knowledge as he ascribed it to contact with a ship calling for spars in the north in the early years of the 19th century and went on to say that “they had not recovered from the effects of this decimation when Te Rauparaha crossed over from Cook Straits and practically completed the annihilation of the Canal builders [Rangitane]”. He was in effect conflating the effects of the disease of the late 1700s, which was not influenza, with those of the ‘te ariki’ epidemic after 1820 (Mitchell 2004a: 173; Skinner 1912: 105-108).

Accounting for the comparatively small Māori population in the Nelson-Marlborough area when Europeans arrived has been a long-standing problem. Hilary and John Mitchell in their recent compilation of Nelson and Marlborough Māori history summed up the situation: “Dozens of deserted pā, kāinga and cultivations throughout the whole of Te Tau Ihu seen by a wide range of commentators – explorers, surveyors, missionaries, settlers and officials – may have been a consequence of the deaths of residents of high rank” (Mitchell 2007: 440).

T. W. Downes recorded a version of a costly epidemic that occurred late in the 1700s, given by Tu-Whawhakia of the Whanganui River:

Now, behold! The people dwelt in peace in the pa at Kau-are-pawa [at the junction of the Kau-are-paoa Stream with the river some 14 miles from the mouth; now Raorikia] until a certain time there came news of a large war party [from Waikato], which was descending the river from its sources to attack them. There were about 800 warriors in this pā, not counting the old men, for in those days the people were very numerous, and had not commenced to decrease. The war party came on down the river on a raid to the south, and their canoes covered the surface of the waters with their numbers, for the up-river people were also very numerous. It was just at this time that the scourge called the Rewharewha attacked our people. It was a very serious calamity, and vast numbers died of it. Sometimes people were attacked one day and did not live over the night, though others lived for two days and nights after they were struck down before death claimed its victims. It was not only a few that were seized; but ten, twenty or thirty were taken the same time, so that it became impossible for the living to properly bewail the dead, owing to the numbers who died. Day after day there was no breathing time allowed to the living on account of the numerous deaths. Then a great fear fell upon the people of Kau-are-pawa, and also the people of Po-takatata, on account of this dreadful malady, and also because of the news of the approaching war party

descending the river. So an exodus took place, and the people fled to the mountains, to places where they could look down on the river and watch the coming war party. In abandoning the pā, many of those who were too ill to be removed were left behind - such was the fear lest the war party should find the people in the pā; but as they fled the canoes of the invaders appeared.

Downes 1915: 89-90

The effects in South Taranaki were noted by the missionaries J. F. Riemenschneider and Richard Taylor. Riemenschneider dated the outbreak to about 1780 from the age of his informant, Paora Kukutai; Taylor dated it to about 1806. (Riemenschneider c.1864; Taylor: Diary 1 June 1846 and 1855: 256). Riemenschneider called it a form of cholera brought by the early European ships to the north. This rewarewa commenced with a violent dysentery, and the hair and eyebrows fell out. T. W. Downes adds that in one Ngati Ruanui pā there were 200 dead but Nga Rauru were even worse affected and Ngati Ruanui took the opportunity to avenge past defeats. They slaughtered many Nga Rauru between Patea and Waitotara and took considerable spoil (Downes, 1915: 97-98.)

“Rewarewa”, Downes wrote “covered its victims with sores and those that escaped death carried the marks of the scourge for the rest of their lives” which he put down to “probably the small pox introduced by sailors about the close of the 18th century. The Rewarewa is the name of a timber closely covered with spots, *Knightia excelsa*. Whakarewarewa, at Rotorua, is said to have obtained its name from this plague” (Downes 1921: 70).

In North Taranaki, Percy Smith recorded the effects on Puketapu, an old pā just north of Bell Block. It was first depopulated:

about the year 1790-95, when that scourge known as Te rewarewa, an epidemic of some kind, caused the death of most of the inhabitants. This scourge was not confined to this place for it ran very generally through the North Island, and according to the accounts of the old Māoris, it carried off many thousands of people.

Smith 1910b: 269

Hamiora Pio, one of Elsdon Best’s key informants, who was born in 1823 and died in 1902, told him “that it was on the second coming of Captain Cook that these epidemics commenced their ravages, and that they spread all over the [North] island, numbers dying in every village. So many died that, for the first time, the dead were all buried near the village” (Best, 1904: 213-237, emphasis added). The few symptoms described – violent dysentery and spots,

are typical of typhoid, or could indicate cholera. Both were common problems in ships of the time.

Clearly the outbreak of the epidemic after 1773 had widespread ramifications for the Māori of the southern North Island and the whole of the South Island. There was a vacuum which northern tribes were only too willing to fill, and the weakness of a neighbouring tribe was something to be exploited not pitied.

Possible Kāi Tahu involvement

Joseph Banks had 2,000 brass Resolution and Adventure medals specially made for the second voyage and some were handed out in Queen Charlotte Sound. One was found by Mr Hood at Otanerau Bay on Arapawa Island, two others in Pelorus Sound and a fourth on Wairau bar. In 1970 three were known from Tahiti, one from Raiatea, one from Vanuatu (the former New Hebrides) and three from British Columbia (O'Shea 1970). But four of them have been found in east Otago. One was picked up by Mrs Mary Ann Hunter in 1863 at the same locality that the ceramic pendant was found (McNab 1909: 60-1); it too is in the Otago Museum. Another was found at Katiki at an unknown date by A. H. Hillman, and one in nearby Whata-Pararae by Matthew Andrew Carter. The fourth Otago medal was obtained at Ryans Beach on the Otago Peninsula by Richard Steele in 1953 (O'Shea 1970). This concentration, and the absence of such medals anywhere else but Marlborough, might suggest that more than just trade was responsible for their presence.

That some Kāi Tahu had been in Queen Charlotte Sound at the time of the affair with the Adventure's cutter is suggested by several items identified as of Otago origin collected there by Cook in 1774, including greenstone adzes, a bone toggle with chevron lines and a wooden flute decorated with diagonal lines (Simmons in Barratt 1987: 49). These provide a context for the recording of a haka in Queen Charlotte Sound on 13 February 1777 by David Samwell, surgeon on the Discovery, with its opening line: 'Teira, temerama kaoure itepoi otagoon'. This has been put into standard Māori as 'Tera te marama ka ura I te poi I [Otago]', translated as 'Behold the moon glows in the night at Otago' (Beaglehole, 1967: 996-7, Church, 2008: 28-9).

Taken together these artefacts, the haka, the pendant, the medals and Koroko's memories suggest that Kāi Tahu might have been involved in the Adventure's cutter affair, and/or afterwards migrated to safer territory in the south where they could carry on the greenstone industry in greater safety. David Simmons has speculated that "the establishment of the greenstone working village of Murdering Beach [followed] some time after Cook's second voyage."

(Simmons in Barratt 1987: 169). They may have fled to escape the epidemic and possibly carried it with them.

Conclusion

Hopefully enough has been suggested here for archaeologists and historians to re-examine the significance of the loss of the cutter from Lieutenant Furneaux's *Adventure* and the role of Cook's expeditions in introducing disease to New Zealand. And in particular the blue and white Chinaware drilled pendant needs specialist attention to assess if it is in fact a relic of Cook's second expedition.

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