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 THE MORIORI OF THE CHATHAM ISLANDS
 

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By D.R. Simmons

Preface:

This paper was originally intended to be presented by Dr. Skinner. Due to ill-health he has not been able to do this. The paper in its present form is my own responsibility and reflects only my own personal views and not those of Dr. Skinner.

Introduction:

The following is an attempt to study the surface collected artefacts of the Chathams, or rather those of them that can be localized, in reference to known habitation settlements and areas. The main sources I have used to supply information on tradition and settlement and two MSS. in the Grey Collection Auckland Public Library, G.N.Z. MMS. 144 labeled "Chathams Genealogies", which contains some 150 pages of traditional history and genealogies written in Moriori and Maori in 1862 by a gathering of Morioris and sent by them to Sir George Grey. Gilbert Mair published some names and figures from this MS. in the T.N.Z.I. 37 p156, 1904. My other source was written by twelve Moriori elders in 1859 for the sons of Rakei ora tauru. This is in G.N.Z. MMS. 16 and is in Maori with occasional Moriori words interspersed. The orthography used in the first text similar to that used by Deighton in his partial Moriori vocabulary published in the appendix to Journal of the House in 1889. If the MSS. is correct there would appear to be some dialectical differences in the language spoken in different parts of the island.

Tradition:

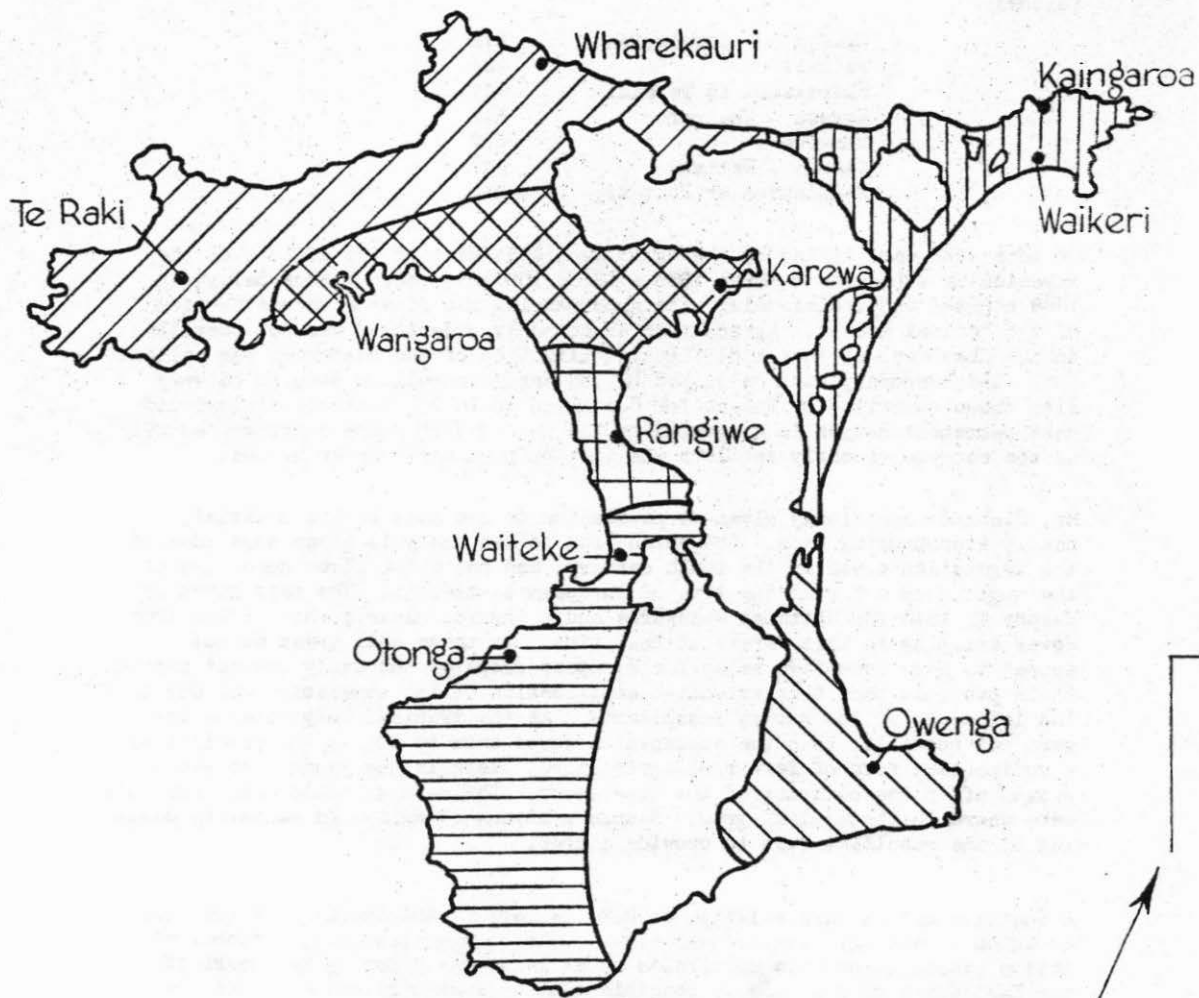
Moriori Tradition is fairly unified in 1862.

The people Kaingaroa in the North, Moreroa on the West of the Whanga Lagoon, and of Waitangi on the West Coast give three named canoes as carrying the founding ancestors, the Rangimata, Puapuke or Oropuke, and Rangihoua, or merely mention three canoes as arriving. The chief ancestor and captain is one moe, who is also known at Otonga on the S.W. Coast, at Owenga, on the East Coast; Marupuku is the chief ancestor unassociated with any canoe, although Rangimata, a person is said to have landed and spoken to him. Except for Kaingaroa, White is also known as an ancestor in all the above. Kahu is mentioned only by Minarapa Tamahiwaki from Otonga where he is placed 41 generations above Mihiti.

Except for Owenga then, the traditions of the founding of the Chathams are similar throughout the country.

The genealogies supplied with the traditions give in some cases long sequences, in other cases, shorter ones, ranging from 71 generations to 17 from the founding ancestor. As the Moriori concept of time and history is rather different to ours, no dating can be achieved by this means. A sequence is given which shows in what relative order if not chronological time various figures lived.

## TRIBAL AREAS



Population of the Chathams:

At the time of the Ngati Matunga invasion the total population of the Chathams was 1673 people divided into seven districts or tribal areas as follows:-

Owenga	population	212
Waikari		231
Wharekauri to Te Raki		177
Karewa - Whangaroa		317
Rangiwe		302
Otonga - Waiteke		162
Rangiaurea or Pitt Is.		267

Of these 226 were killed by the Ngati Awa, 1336 died of the effects of the invasion or otherwise between 1835 - 1862, 105 survived. Bishop Selwyn in 1848 counted 268 individuals. The accompanying map gives a reconstruction of the "tribal areas". Agriculture as commonly understood was not possible on the Chathams, so that a different utilization of the resources was called for. The temporary huts described by the early travellers seem to be very like those described by Polack for Northland in 1838. That the Moriori did make permanent houses is evidenced by the presence of house carvings, as well as the reports of early settlers who mention permanent winter houses.

Mr. Richards has kindly given me permission to use some of his material, namely accompanying maps. One which from pollen analysis gives some idea of the vegetation cover in the tenth century, and one which gives some idea of the vegetation cover at the time of European settlement. The maps given by Heaphy in 1843 for Waitangi Whangaroa and Kaingaroa clearly show little tree cover existing in those areas at that time. As these soil areas do not appear to have been favourable for European crops of the early contact period it is probable that this extensive modification of the vegetation was due to the influence of the native inhabitants. As the tropical Polynesian crops were not possible, then the explanation would seem to lie in the practice of a rudimentary form of fern root agriculture. Fern is the product of second growth after the clearing of the tree cover. The most suitable areas for this were where the broad-leaf grew. Baucke mentions clearing and selective weeding of the resultant fern to provide a crop.

A question arises here relative to N.Z. as well as the Chathams, a question to which I have not devoted much time. Colenso mentions quite a number of native plants which were cultivated or at least cared for by the Maori of the East Coast of N.Z. Is it possible that in such marginal areas as the Chathams and the Southern part of the South Island these native plants were cultivated after a fashion to provide not only additional source of food, but to provide an important source which complemented the hunting, gathering activities which we know were carried on?

In the Windmill Hill culture of England we see an invasion of a Neolithic community into what were formerly hunting areas. An invasion which it has been postulated was made possible by a developed kit of polished tools capable of being used to clear the forest for cultivation.

In the Chathams an analogous situation seems to have existed in that the Moriori had a well-developed kit of woodworking tools and yet did not build dugout canoes, and for a good part of the year did not live in permanent houses. Certainly their temporary shelters, wash-through canoes and winter houses would demand adzes to cut the sticks and stakes necessary but this would not explain the prevalence nor the distribution of adze finds on the islands. A more logical explanation in the light of what has been said is that these tools were mainly for the clearing of standing trees to allow secondary growth of ferns, the root of which would supply the necessary carbohydrates in the diet, the proteins being supplied by birds, fish and sea mammals. Also considering the limited amount of fern cover existing in the tenth century, something in the way of rudimentary agriculture would be necessary to support the brown population at the time of the Maori invasion. The presence of Melanesia soil horizons predating the European contact would seem to indicate some form of burning off was also used.

The main task however, that I have set myself for this paper is the study of the artefacts. The main problems are:-

1. Are there any cultural differences which can be shown up by the proportional distribution of the artefacts.
2. If cultural differences exist can these be shown to be related to historic settlement sites.
3. Are there any sites or areas which would repay properly conducted investigation and which would be likely to yield information as to the cultural development of the Moriori.

The area is a distal unit and there would seem to be a possibility of studying these problems within its confines, and perhaps from this being able to see what changes, if any, occurred in a Polynesian community apparently isolated from contact with evolving groups.

All culture must change, if only slightly, over time. The discovery and utilization of differing natural resources is only one aspect of this change.

In this preliminary study I have confined myself to a study of some of these as a first step of a much wider study.

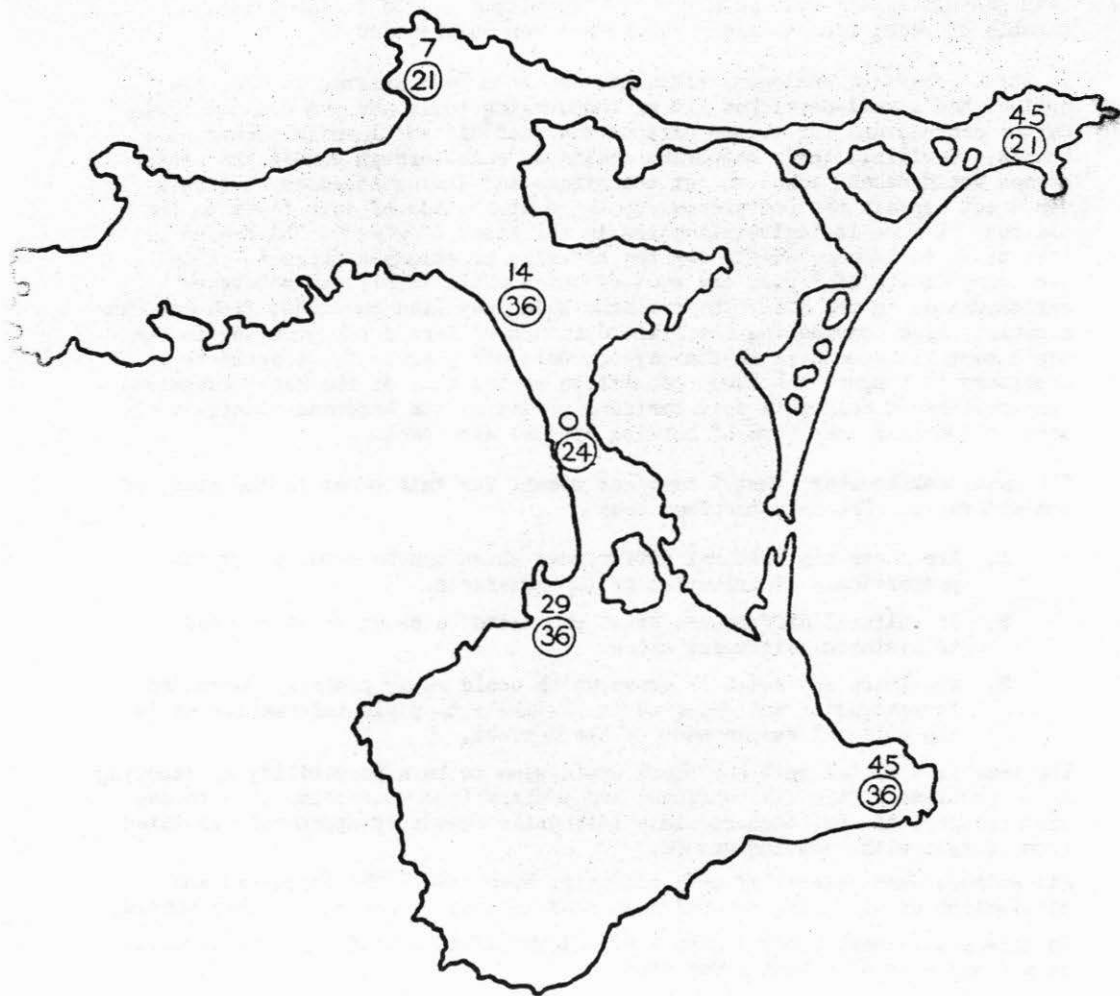
#### The Artefacts and their Distribution:

In making this study I have used unlocalized artefacts as a control group for those which are localized, checking off overall distribution of the various groups in the localized collection against the unlocalized group so as to make sure that the figures arrived at are not due to the vagaries of collecting.

## PERCENTAGE

Archaic  
Classic

traits



These are two separate percentages based on

- a* Archaic traits from Wairau Bar
- b* Classic traits from Golson

In working with surface collections certain limitations are obvious.

1. There may have been a collector in one area who had more knowledge and was more assiduous than collectors from other areas.
2. Peculiarities of a site e.g. on a dune may result in a greater selection of artefacts from early levels being collected.
3. The localizations of the artefacts may not be either correct or exact enough.
4. In this case the area to be studied is not very large so that at first sight distributional studies would not seem to be profitable.
5. The numbers of artefacts from any one area is often too small to be regarded as a reliable sample.

The artefacts which I have used are those contained in the Otago Museum and Canterbury Museums, together with the published examples.

Adzes: (Summary of analysis .. Editor)

The most numerous and important class of artefacts is adzes. These I have treated according to two main variables, cross-section and grip. In all 504 adzes have been studied of which 195 are localised. There was a slight preponderance of unlocalized examples in all variables studied.

Any analysis of the gripped adzes shows that the greater proportion came from the Kaingaroa - Owenga areas. There is also a greater variety of cross-section in the gripped adzes from these areas. It would appear, then, that these areas have considerable archaic components in their culture. In Owenga, a settled site historically, it has been overlain with later elements. Taroto would seem to have some affinities with Kaingaroa.

Fish Hooks:

Out of a total of 79 simple fish hooks studied, only 23 have been localized. Of these, 15 are localized to the Kaingaroa area, 2 to Owenga, 1 to Taupella, 1 to Waitangi etc. Not sufficient are localized to make any study valid.

These are in the collections: 9 composite hook points, 1 barracouta hook point and 2 large (92) barbed points of what look like harpoons, being points with a bulb or knob at the lower end. One female harpoon is known from Matarakau near Kaingaroa.

Notes:

Most fish hooks are made of whalebone either sub-fossil or fresh, or limestone, though whale ivory and other sea mammal teeth are used. The commonest form of working is by an attrition saw although drill marks occur on an unfinished hook from Owenga.

Ornaments:

1. The sperm whale tooth with either transverse or dorso-ventral perforation is known from all over the Chathams as also are pierced shells usually of the scallop, or in one case, of a large whelk. Certain diagnostic types of ornament do occur.

From Owenga there are:-

- (a) 5 reels of whalebone, the holes of which have been completed by means of a drill and then an abrasive with a string pulled through.
- (b) A necklace of whalebone imitations of whale tooth units.
- (c) Squared off and perforated carcharodon shark teeth.
- (d) 2 necklaces of whale bone imitations of porpoise teeth.
- (e) Sperm whale teeth perforated as above.

From Kaingaroa area there is:-

- (a) The whale tooth imitation unit.
- (b) Squared and perforated shark's teeth.
- (c) A whale-bone "fish"-shaped pendant.
- (d) A hook pendant.

The fish-shaped pendant also occurs at Pitt Island.

Apart from these the ornament complement, except for sperm whale teeth pendants, is very sparse. Early travellers record the Moriori as wearing a single bone breast pendant. Shand mentions necklaces of paua shells.

#### Patu: Mataa

The common Moriori patu: the okewa of bill-hook shape, made of schist awa, the more normal straight varieties, with or without "eyebrow" ridges, are not localized except in some eight or so cases; this, despite the fact that about 50 occur in the collections. All that can be said is that they appear common to both types of site. The same can be said of the mataa or blubber knife. These are the main artefacts which are numerically important enough to be considered here. As can be seen, a number of problems arise which can only be settled by excavation. From the accompanying element distribution map it is possible to recognize at least three types of distribution.

1. Areas showing a predominance of archaic elements.
2. Areas showing a predominance of classic elements with some archaic traits.
3. Areas showing a predominance of classic elements with few archaic elements.

Do these represent three phases perhaps in a time relationship? Or are they entirely separate cultures?

The importance of the back wider than front cross-section (2B) could be perhaps due to influence from New Zealand, or to local evolution. The presence of patu forms would seem to indicate relationship with New Zealand.

The question here is if the Chatham cultures are derived from New Zealand or elsewhere, from whence did they come? My impression, and it is only such based on the cosmological aspects of the genealogies, is that the origin may have been from somewhere in the East Coast region of the North Island. A strong ocean current sweeps up from Otago Heads to Owenga, and from a distance off East Cape, a strong current from the North runs along the North Coast to Kaingaroa, where it meets the Southern current coming up the West Coast of Chatham Island. It was on Kaingaroa Beach that Dr. Skinner saw a large kauri log in 1924. Mr. Richards tells me that the locals have reported picking up coconuts here which still retained part of their shoot.

In this preliminary study I can draw no conclusions; I can merely raise problems which can only be settled by excavation at the area likely to prove sensitive enough to provide information which itself may either:-

- (a) provide the answers
- (b) show the problems to be non-existent or
- (c) raise new problems