

# Imagining Moriori

**A history of ideas of a people in the twentieth century**

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by Jacinta Blank

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## Abstract

The history of ideas about Moriori origins, settlement, and culture has yet to be charted across the entire twentieth century. The thesis' primary goal is to begin the documentation of this in detail. It examines the two key strands of thought that have shaped this history of ideas: that Moriori were the remnants of a mainland pre-Maori people, and that they were the descendants of Maori voyagers. These sets of ideas existed simultaneously, which led to an intellectual history shaped by intersecting curves formed through long-ranging debate rather than a single linear progression of thought. Each strand of thought comprised several threads, or ideas about Moriori history that altered over time. The thesis traces this history of ideas about Moriori origins, settlement, and culture through texts, from Alexander Shand's ethnological analysis *The Moriori People of the Chatham Islands*, published in 1911, to Barry Barclay's 2000 documentary, *The Feathers of Peace*. It establishes the ideas advanced in key texts on Moriori history, explores the context in which these texts were produced, and suggests a link between shifts in debate and contemporary relations between Maori and Pakeha.

## **Abbreviations**

*JPS – The Journal of the Polynesian Society*

*NZJH – New Zealand Journal of History*

*TNZI – Transactions of the New Zealand Institute*

# 1. Charting the History of Ideas of a People

## Introduction

In the course of the twentieth century, the history of the Moriori people became the subject of contradictory theories advanced largely by Pakeha academics and amateur scholars. Throughout the first half of the century, a number of New Zealand history texts and schoolbooks conveyed the belief that Chatham Island Moriori were the remnants of a pre-Maori mainland population, forced from the North Island by Maori settlers. By the late 1980s, this idea had been challenged by a succession of prominent academics. They argued that Moriori were instead the descendants of Maori voyagers who had discovered the Chathams – either accidentally or deliberately – at some point after Maori settlement of New Zealand. Both strands of thought about Moriori history existed in the public domain from the 1920s. Yet the notion of a mainland Moriori people remained sufficiently entrenched in late twentieth century popular beliefs about New Zealand’s history to grieve Moriori descendants.

In May 1994, Moriori claimants submitted a copy of a *School Journal* article as evidence in a Waitangi Tribunal hearing on land claims in the Chatham Islands.<sup>1</sup> They argued that the article, ‘How the Maoris Came to New Zealand’, was an example of “group defamation” of Moriori by the Crown through the education system.<sup>2</sup> The story told of New Zealand’s discovery by Polynesian explorers, who found people of “an inferior culture” occupying the North Island. These were the Maruiwi or Mouriuri: alleged ancestors of Chatham Islands Moriori.<sup>3</sup> One witness at the hearing drew a parallel between defamation of Moriori and anti-Semitism because both generated “savage myths” based on perceptions of ethnic traits.<sup>4</sup> On this occasion at Turnbull House in Wellington, theories of Moriori origins and culture represented more than the faded print in an 80 year-old school text. The words had come to symbolise a grievance long-held by the very people they sought to describe. The influence of theories about Moriori history developed by two Pakeha scholars at the beginning of

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<sup>1</sup> *Rekohu*, Waitangi Tribunal Report, Wai 64 (Wellington, 2001), p. 315.

<sup>2</sup> Michael King, *Moriori. A People Rediscovered*, revised ed. (Auckland, 2000), p. 192.

<sup>3</sup> ‘How The Maoris Came To New Zealand’, *School Journal*, Part 3 (March, 1916), pp. 41-46, p. 42.

<sup>4</sup> King, *Moriori*, revised ed., p. 192.

the century was still felt in its closing years, despite rebuttals of those ideas that existed since the 1920s.

The history of ideas about Moriori origins, settlement, and culture has yet to be charted across the entire twentieth century. The thesis' primary goal is to begin the documentation of this in detail. It examines the two key strands of thought that have shaped this history of ideas: that Moriori were the remnants of a mainland pre-Maori people, and that they were the descendants of Maori voyagers. These sets of ideas existed simultaneously, which led to an intellectual history shaped by intersecting curves formed through long-ranging debate rather than a single linear progression of thought. Each strand of thought comprised several threads, or ideas about Moriori history that altered over time. The thesis traces this history of ideas about Moriori origins, settlement, and culture through texts, from Alexander Shand's ethnological analysis *The Moriori People of the Chatham Islands*, published in 1911, to Barry Barclay's 2000 documentary, *The Feathers of Peace*.<sup>5</sup> It establishes the ideas advanced in key texts on Moriori history, explores the context in which these texts were produced, and suggests a link between shifts in debate and contemporary relations between Maori and Pakeha.

In an intellectual history exploring ideas about Moriori origins, settlement, and culture, context is a crucial factor.<sup>6</sup> The thesis pinpoints connections between those ideas and the social environment in which they were produced.<sup>7</sup> The ideas conveyed in a few texts did not gain widespread exposure until decades after they were published, and the thesis examines possible reasons for this delay, as well as reasons for the success of other texts in reaching general audiences immediately. It identifies shifts in debate across the twentieth century, investigating possible catalysts for those changes, and looks at resistance to new ideas about Moriori history. The thesis also explores possible explanations for the endurance of ideas first put forward by Percy Smith and Elsdon Best in the face of substantial refutations of their theories about Moriori history.

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<sup>5</sup> Alexander Shand, *The Moriori People of the Chatham Islands: their history and traditions* (Wellington, New Plymouth, 1911); *The Feathers of Peace* (video-recording) He Taonga Films, 2000.

<sup>6</sup> Quentin Skinner, *Visions of Politics, Vol. I: Regarding Method* (Cambridge, 2002), p. 42.

<sup>7</sup> 'Introduction', *Modern Intellectual History*, 1, 1 (2004), pp. 1-2, p. 1.

This history of ideas intersects with other aspects of the history of ethnic relations in New Zealand and white settler societies such as Australia and Canada. Most pertinently, it is firmly connected to the broader history of bicultural relations in New Zealand. It may also contain parallels with the history of ideas about first peoples in other white settler societies. Undoubtedly, the topic would benefit from exploration of these intersections. However, broadening this thesis' focus to include greater consideration of the development of bicultural relations in New Zealand would risk burying its primary investigation – New Zealanders' ideas about Moriori history – under the complexities of a far larger topic. While in order to consider possible parallels between the history of ideas about Moriori and those of first peoples in Australia and Canada in the depth it deserves, the thesis' scope would need to be expanded to include wider aspects of imperial history. This too would require a shift in focus that could detract from the primary investigation, which to date has not been explored in depth. Therefore, to ensure that the central issue for investigation receives detailed analysis, the thesis is tightly focused.

## **Methodology**

Ideas about Moriori origins and culture were transmitted in everyday conversations, school lessons, and talkback radio debates, but tangible evidence of these ideas remains only in textual form. The thesis will examine relevant ethnological writings, anthropological texts, general histories of New Zealand, documentaries, letters to newspaper editors, and a museum exhibit as a means of pinpointing these ideas. In addition, analysis of school texts is critical to charting this history of ideas because, as Michael King and David Simmons noted, Percy Smith and Elsdon Best's ideas were transmitted through the classroom for much of the twentieth century.<sup>8</sup> Conceptual shifts in this history of ideas may also be pinpointed through school texts, especially in those published during the 1960s.<sup>9</sup>

The disadvantage of this approach is that it does not identify the degree to which these texts were representative of generally held beliefs about Moriori history, nor does it

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<sup>8</sup> King, *Moriori. A People Rediscovered* (Auckland, 1989), p. 174; D. R. Simmons, *The Great New Zealand Myth. A Study of the Discovery and Origin Traditions of the Maori* (Wellington, 1976), pp. 3, 7.

<sup>9</sup> The school texts analysed in this thesis represent all those in collections held by Macmillan Brown and Henry Field Libraries.

give a precise measurement of particular texts' influence on New Zealanders. The most effective available method would be oral histories taken from people of varying age groups to determine their understandings of Moriori history. However, because this topic is relatively uncharted, the thesis follows the broadest possible level of inquiry rather than narrowing its focus even further. Instead, evidence of a particular text's influence is gauged from mention made of it in subsequent texts.

This history of ideas about Moriori history is approached from a Pakeha perspective. As a child I believed that a people known as the moa hunters were first to settle New Zealand and were subsequently killed or driven from the mainland by later, Maori arrivals. While attending teachers' college in the early 1990s I was told instead that there were no such people as the Moriori, and their existence was a myth created by Pakeha to discredit Maori. More recently, on hearing that I was studying New Zealand history, people sometimes asked: "So, what's the deal with the Moriori? Did they exist or didn't they?" The degree of confusion I encountered about Moriori history came to intrigue me, and this thesis stems from my attempts to understand the process that created it. Therefore, my engagement with Moriori history as a Pakeha shapes the thesis' focus on what, for much of the century, was largely a Pakeha endeavour: presenting theories about Moriori history.

Although the thesis specifically explores ideas about an aspect of New Zealand history, in its broadest sense it also engages with one facet of ethnic relations between Moriori and Pakeha, Moriori and Maori, and Maori and Pakeha. As labels used to signify ethnicity sometimes attract controversy, it may be prudent at this point to define some of the terms used in this thesis. The word 'Pakeha' is one such contested term. Objections to its use include the belief that Maori originally used it to insult Europeans, that it is a label imposed by Maori and not one of choice, and that the only name required for the descendants of settlers is 'New Zealanders'.<sup>10</sup> Those who actively identify as Pakeha tend to be middle class liberals, whose circumstances are

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<sup>10</sup> Avril Bell, "'We're just New Zealanders": Pakeha Identity Politics', in *Nga Patai: Racism and Ethnic Relations in Aotearoa/New Zealand*, edited by Paul Spoonley, David Pearson and Cluny Macpherson (Palmerston North, 1996), pp. 144-157, p. 144.

not indicative of all descendants of white settlers.<sup>11</sup> Yet, because ‘Pakeha’ is widely acknowledged as referring to this population, if not universally accepted as a term of use, the term is employed here to signify those Europeans who settled in New Zealand and their descendants. ‘Moriōri’ refers to the first Chatham Islanders, as well as their descendants of mixed ancestry; ‘Moriōri descendants’ is also used to describe the latter as modern Moriōri utilise both terms.<sup>12</sup> ‘Mainland Moriōri’ is used as shorthand for the belief that Moriōri were New Zealand’s first settlers. Finally, given the historical baggage of the term ‘race’, wherever possible the phrases ‘ethnic relations’ and ‘ethnicity’ are used in preference to ‘race relations’ and ‘race’, except in contexts where it seems anachronistic to refer to ethnicity rather than race.<sup>13</sup>

Beliefs about Moriōri history that stemmed from theories advanced by Percy Smith and Elsdon Best are sometimes referred to as the ‘Moriōri myth’.<sup>14</sup> However, this thesis avoids using the term because, by implying there was a single version of pre-Maori settlement stories, it does not capture the complexity of ideas held by those influenced by the work of the two ethnologists. Instead, I follow D. R. Simmons and K. R. Howe, who largely refer to ‘stories’ rather than ‘myths’.<sup>15</sup>

## Historiography

This thesis centres on the historiography dealing with Moriōri published in the twentieth century. As a history of ideas it explores not only academic texts but histories written for schoolchildren and for general audiences. This approach blurs boundaries between primary sources and secondary literature, and two of the texts are utilised as both within the analysis. For example, Chapter Three cites Michael King’s *Moriōri* and Douglas Sutton’s article ‘A Culture History of the Chatham Islands’ as secondary sources in its summary of pre-contact Moriōri history.<sup>16</sup> In Chapter Five,

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<sup>11</sup> Paul Spoonley, ‘Constructing Ourselves: The Post-Colonial Politics of Pakeha’, in *Justice and Identity: Antipodean Practices*, edited by Margaret Wilson and Anna Yeatman (Wellington, 1995), pp. 96-115, pp. 105,107.

<sup>12</sup> Maui Solomon, ‘Foreword’, in Michael King, *Moriōri. A People Rediscovered* (Auckland, 1989), p. 9.

<sup>13</sup> Kenan Malik, *The Meaning of Race: Race, History and Culture in Western Society* (Basingstoke, London, 1996), pp. 71, 117.

<sup>14</sup> Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies. Research and Indigenous Peoples* (London, New York, Dunedin, 1999), p. 87.

<sup>15</sup> K. R. Howe, *The Quest for Origins* (Auckland, 2005), pp. 162-65; Simmons, *The Great New Zealand Myth*, p. 7.

<sup>16</sup> Douglas G. Sutton, ‘A Culture History of the Chatham Islands’, *JPS*, 89, 1 (1980), pp. 67-93.

which deals with developments during the 1980s, both texts are approached as primary sources instead. However, this applies only because their pre-contact histories remain authoritative. The majority of texts that contributed to this history of ideas have either since been discredited, or else superseded by other works.

Most prominent among those discredited are Percy Smith's ideas about Moriori history included in his annotations to *The Lore of the Whare-wananga* and Elsdon Best's theories of a pre-Maori population expounded in his article, 'Maori and Maruiwi'.<sup>17</sup> The material that Smith published as *The Lore of the Whare-wananga* was given to him by Ngati Kahungunu scholar Hoani Te Whatahoro, who claimed the contents of these documents were the teachings of three tohunga, recorded by Te Whatahoro during a gathering of Wairarapa Maori during the late 1850s.<sup>18</sup> Although *The Lore of the Whare-wananga's* most notable contribution to ideas about pre-contact New Zealand history was the Great Fleet migration sequence, its account of early settlement also featured a pre-Maori population conquered and exiled by descendants of the first Polynesian explorers.<sup>19</sup> In his annotations Smith advanced the idea that this pre-Maori people were the ancestors of Chatham Islands Moriori.<sup>20</sup> In 'Maori and Maruiwi', Elsdon Best also argued that the exiles' destination had been the Chatham Islands, embellishing his version by emphasising the Melanesian origins of this first people, whom he imbued with a number of negative qualities.<sup>21</sup> Subsequently, mainland Moriori populated a number of pre-contact histories written for children, including articles in the *School Journal* and A. W. Reed's reader, *The Coming of the Maori to Ao-tea-roa*.<sup>22</sup> The popularity of the notion that Maori conquered New Zealand's first settlers was such that it persisted for decades in the minds of Pakeha New Zealanders, despite a series of refutations.

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<sup>17</sup> S. Percy Smith, *The Lore of the Whare-wananga, Vol. II* (New Plymouth, 1915), pp. 71-77; Elsdon Best, 'Maori and Maruiwi', *TNZI*, 48 (1915), pp. 435-447.

<sup>18</sup> M. J. Parsons, 'Hoani Te Whatahoro Jury', *The Dictionary of New Zealand Biography, Vol. I, 1769-1869* (Wellington, 1990), pp. 214-15, p. 214.

<sup>19</sup> Simmons, *The Great New Zealand Myth*, p. 16; Smith, *Vol. II*, pp. 71-77.

<sup>20</sup> Smith, *Vol. II*, p. 77.

<sup>21</sup> Best, 'Maori and Maruiwi', pp. 435-36.

<sup>22</sup> 'The Coming of the Maoris', *School Journal*, Part 1 (February, 1916), pp. 10-16; 'How the Maoris Came to New Zealand', pp. 41-46; 'The Passing of the Mouriuri', *School Journal*, Part 3 (July, 1916), pp. 184-91; 'The Canoes Voyages of the Polynesians', *School Journal*, Part 3 (April, 1946), pp. 68-76; A. W. Reed, *The Coming of the Maori to Ao-tea-roa* (Dunedin, Wellington, 1934).

H. D. Skinner's analysis of Moriori material culture, *The Morioris of Chatham Islands*, made the first public criticism of Smith and Best's mainland Moriori theories. While most of his text was devoted to demonstrating that Moriori artefacts were influenced by Polynesian and not Melanesian design, he also weighed the reliability of accounts of Moriori origins in *The Lore of the Whare-wananga* against Moriori oral traditions collected by Alexander Shand and Hirawanu Tapu and published as *The Moriori People of the Chatham Islands*. Skinner argued that Shand's version of events possessed greater veracity than that in *The Lore of the Whare-wananga*, and praised his ethnological skills.<sup>23</sup> Although both Shand and Skinner's analyses of Moriori culture received little public attention at the time of their publication – being eclipsed by Smith and Best's theories – their work influenced researchers later that century and informed new approaches to Moriori history in the 1970s and 1980s.

In 1976, *The Great New Zealand Myth* – David Simmons' analysis of *The Lore of the Whare-wananga* – refuted the authenticity of accounts in the second volume that claimed a pre-Maori people as New Zealand's first settlers, validating the thrust of Skinner's objections to the text.<sup>24</sup> Four years later, in 'A Culture History of the Chatham Islands', Douglas Sutton argued that archaeological evidence confirmed that Moriori were descended from Maori voyagers, though he, like Simmons, believed that they became extinct in the twentieth century.<sup>25</sup> It was not until Michael King wrote his 1989 post-contact history, *Moriori*, after being commissioned to do so by Moriori descendants, that a refutation of Percy Smith and Elsdon Best's mainland Moriori theories positioned Moriori as a thriving people.<sup>26</sup> This represented a major development in historiography dealing with Moriori that influenced not only later texts on Moriori history but also histories of New Zealand in the twentieth century.

Historiography dealing with Moriori lacks a detailed analysis of the development of ideas about Moriori origins, settlement, and culture across the twentieth century. To date the only substantial investigation of this topic is Peter Clayworth's doctoral thesis,

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<sup>23</sup> H. D. Skinner, *The Morioris of Chatham Islands* (Honolulu, 1923), pp. 16-21, 65-133 (material culture analysis); Shand, *The Moriori*.

<sup>24</sup> Simmons, *The Great New Zealand Myth*, p. 8.

<sup>25</sup> Sutton, 'A Culture History', p. 67.

<sup>26</sup> King, *Moriori*, p. 16.

“‘An indolent and chilly folk’”: the Development of the Idea of the “Moriore Myth””.<sup>27</sup> Clayworth examines the origins of the ‘Moriore myth’, pinpointing its beginnings in a conjuncture between Pakeha scholarship and the influence of colonisation on Maori traditions.<sup>28</sup> Although Clayworth does sketch its later transmission through New Zealand histories and school texts, he does not explore this in depth because his primary focus is the initial development of the ‘myth’.<sup>29</sup> Michael King also outlined the development of ideas about Moriore history in his post-contact account, *Moriore*, but again, the topic was not examined in detail.<sup>30</sup> M. P. K. Sorrenson’s intellectual history, *Maori Origins and Migrations*, touches upon the subject, establishing its context within a wider field of research on Polynesian migration to New Zealand.<sup>31</sup> More recently, in *The Quest for Origins*, Kerry Howe explores the development of ideas about Moriore history in greater depth, as part of his analysis of Maori origins research. The thesis considers his contention that the popularity of Smith and Best’s ideas about Moriore history lay in their use as a justification for European colonisation of New Zealand.<sup>32</sup> This argument is voiced by others, including Peter Gibbons, who places Smith and Best’s ideas about Moriore history within a broader cultural colonisation of New Zealand by Pakeha writers.<sup>33</sup>

Gibbons argues that the prose, memoirs, and images of New Zealand generated from the late nineteenth century constituted an indirect form of colonisation. This textual New Zealand defined the landscape, history and people in terms understood by Pakeha, marginalising Maori – and Moriore – in the process; Gibbons calls for a “contextual and symptomatic reading” of texts not normally considered of literary importance in order to document the cultural colonisation of New Zealand. Although such an approach risks essentialist arguments that position Pakeha as a homogenous force hell-bent on the deliberate subjugation of Maori and matauranga Maori,

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<sup>27</sup> Peter Clayworth, “‘An indolent and chilly folk’”: the Development of the Idea of the “Moriore Myth””, University of Otago PhD thesis (2001).

<sup>28</sup> Clayworth, p. 277.

<sup>29</sup> Clayworth, p. ii.

<sup>30</sup> King, *Moriore*, pp. 172-74.

<sup>31</sup> M. P. K. Sorrenson, *Maori Origins and Migrations. The Genesis of Some Pakeha Myths and Legends* (Auckland, 1979).

<sup>32</sup> Howe, *Origins*, pp. 162-65.

<sup>33</sup> Peter Gibbons, ‘Non-Fiction’ in *The Oxford History of New Zealand Literature in English*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., edited by Terry Sturm (Auckland, 1998), pp. 31-118, p. 62. Also see: James Belich, *Making Peoples. A History of the New Zealanders* (Auckland, 1996), p. 26; King, *Moriore*, p. 188; Ranginui Walker, *Ka Whawhai Tonu Matou. Struggle Without End*, revised ed. (Auckland, 2004), p. 42.

Gibbons does emphasise the “multiplicity of identities” within Pakeha society, and warns against reductive historical analysis.<sup>34</sup> Percy Smith and Elsdon Best’s theories of Moriori origins and culture offer one example of Gibbon’s cultural colonisation, but resistance to their ideas from other Pakeha writers suggests that this form of colonisation was not representative of all texts on Moriori history produced by Pakeha. Instead, this thesis aims to demonstrate that throughout the history of ideas about Moriori origins and culture Pakeha made significant contributions to both sides of the debate, and their role cannot be reduced to simply that of cultural coloniser.<sup>35</sup>

## Overview

This thesis follows a chronological sequence, with chapters divided into periods that trace the influence of particular texts. Chapter Two examines Percy Smith and Elsdon Best’s role in popularising the notion that New Zealand’s first settlers were not Polynesian, but had mixed Polynesian and Melanesian ancestry. Although they could not agree on a name for these settlers – Smith favoured ‘Tangata-whenua’ while Best preferred ‘Maruiwi’ – both men believed that they were usurped by later Polynesian arrivals. They based their arguments on material gained from Hoani Te Whatahoro, in the belief that he was a repository of oral traditions from the tohunga Te Matorohanga. In 1915, Smith published this material in *The Lore of the Whare-Wananga*, the second volume of which contained a narrative describing the conquest of New Zealand’s first settlers by Polynesian explorers. The same year Best published ‘Maori and Maruiwi’, which was based on the same sources as Smith’s text and also portrayed these settlers as inferior to later Polynesian migrants, who subsequently killed most of the population and forced the remainder into exile. Neither man explicitly linked these settlers with Chatham Islands Moriori in the texts but they hinted at the exiles’ destination, and a hint was sufficient to create certainty in texts influenced by Smith and Best’s work. For instance, when the *School Journal* published an article, ‘How the Maoris Came to New Zealand’, a year later it named the exiled population as ancestors of Chatham Islands Moriori.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Gibbons, pp. 9, 13-15.

<sup>35</sup> Ann Laura Stoler and Frederick Cooper, ‘Between Metropole and Colony. Rethinking a Research Agenda’, in *Tensions of Empire. Colonial Cultures in a Bourgeois World*, edited by Ann Laura Stoler and Frederick Cooper (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London, 1997), pp. 1-58, p. 34.

<sup>36</sup> Smith, *Vol. II*, pp. 71-77; Best, ‘Maori and Maruiwi’, pp. 435-447; ‘How the Maoris Came to New Zealand’, p. 42.

Smith and Best were founding members of the Polynesian Society, created as a forum to preserve non-European traditions in print for the benefit of future generations of Pakeha scholars.<sup>37</sup> Chapter Three explores the role of other Society members in creating debate about Smith and Best's Moriori theories. The ethnologists' work on Moriori was preceded by that of another Society member, Chatham Islands ethnologist Alexander Shand. Encouraged by his friend Smith, Shand published a series of articles on Moriori history and culture in the Society's journal from 1892 to 1898.<sup>38</sup> This collection of observations and oral traditions was made in collaboration with Hirawanu Tapu, a Moriori kaumatua who interviewed the few remaining elders on the Chathams. Based on this evidence Shand argued that Moriori culture reflected Polynesian rather than Melanesian roots, an argument that would later be contradicted by Smith when he studied material given to him by Te Whatahoro.<sup>39</sup> When Smith published a posthumous edition of Shand's articles, entitled *The Moriori People of the Chatham Islands*, he added a final chapter incorporating material from *The Lore of the Whare-wananga* that contradicted Shand's earlier findings.<sup>40</sup> Yet, despite Smith and Best's investment in the theory that New Zealand's first settlers were at least partly Melanesian, they could not prevent a younger member of the Society, H. D. Skinner, from publishing a refutation of their work.

The Polynesian Society was not a homogenous force in the promulgation of Moriori origins and culture theories. Most notably, Skinner's analysis of material culture, *The Morioris of Chatham Islands*, argued that Moriori were Polynesian and shared ancestry with Maori in the southern regions of the South Island.<sup>41</sup> Another member of the Society, Sir Peter Buck, later made his own refutation of Smith and Best's Moriori theories in his seminal work, *The Coming of the Maori*. He observed that the oral tradition on which their theories were based was so detailed as to lack credibility, and made a case for both Moriori and Maori as descendants of Tahitian explorers.<sup>42</sup> Chapter Four examines the process by which, despite Skinner and Buck's efforts,

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<sup>37</sup> M. P. K. Sorenson, *Manifest Duty. The Polynesian Society over 100 Years* (Auckland, 1992), p. 24.

<sup>38</sup> See Alexander Shand in *JPS*, volumes 1-7 (1892-1898). Also see Chapter Three, footnote 15 for bibliographical details of his articles.

<sup>39</sup> Shand, *The Moriori People*, pp. 2, 31; Sorenson, *Manifest Duty*, p. 38.

<sup>40</sup> Percy Smith, 'The Moriori People of the Chatham Islands: their traditions and history', in Shand, *The Moriori*, pp. 207-218.

<sup>41</sup> Skinner, *Morioris of Chatham Islands*, pp. 129-132.

<sup>42</sup> Sir Peter Buck, (Te Rangi Hiroa) *The Coming of the Maori* (Wellington, 1949), pp. 11-21.

Smith and Best's theories continued to be transmitted through school history texts during the mid-twentieth century. It looks at changes wrought when Roger Duff's moa hunter paradigm filtered through the education system, replacing mainland Moriori with a Polynesian hunter and gatherer culture.<sup>43</sup>

Chapter Five explores texts produced in the 1980s that proved crucial to undermining the lingering influence of Smith and Best's Moriori theories. When Bill Saunders filmed his documentary *Moriori* in 1980, it was to counter the continued influence of Smith and Best's theories. Like the majority of New Zealanders, Saunders believed that the death of the last 'full-blooded' Moriori, Tommy Solomon, in 1933 had meant their extinction as a people.<sup>44</sup> Yet his documentary was the catalyst for a Solomon family reunion in 1983, which in turn proved vital to the Moriori cultural revival in the 1980s. In 1987, Moriori representatives commissioned Michael King to write their post-contact history.<sup>45</sup> King based his summary of pre-contact history on work by Douglas Sutton, who had published the results of detailed archaeological investigations on Chatham Island in the *Journal of the Polynesian Society* in 1980.<sup>46</sup> Through his text, *Moriori*, King made it clear that Moriori were distinct from the imaginings of Smith and Best, and that they had survived the events of the nineteenth century and rumours of their death as a people in the twentieth century. Chapter Five examines *Moriori* in depth in order to gauge its influence on New Zealanders' understanding of Moriori history and explores possible explanations for its success in reaching a wide audience, making connections between King's work and the state of contemporary bicultural relations. It also highlights his text's role in re-presenting academic refutations of Smith and Best's theories about Moriori for a general audience.

With the exceptions of Hoani Te Whatahoro and Sir Peter Buck, Pakeha had developed theories of Moriori origins and culture through much of the century. Chapter Six focuses on the closing years of the century, in which changes signalled by the collaboration between King and Moriori in the late eighties continued with the production of texts by Maori and Moriori. In 2000, a documentary made by Ngati Apa

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<sup>43</sup> Roger Duff, *The Moa-Hunter Period of Maori Culture* (Wellington, 1950).

<sup>44</sup> Marcia Russell, 'Islands of the Myths', *New Zealand Listener*, 8 November 1980, pp. 14-15, p. 14.

<sup>45</sup> Solomon, 'Forward', p. 9.

<sup>46</sup> Sutton, 'A Culture History', pp. 67-93.

film-maker Barry Barclay, *The Feathers of Peace*, highlighted the effects of colonisation by Europeans and Maori upon Moriori.<sup>47</sup> Its treatment of the 1835 invasion of the Chatham Islands by Te Ati Awa Maori was in stark contrast to an exhibit staged at Te Papa in 1998, which drew criticism for its handling of the invasion.<sup>48</sup> That criticism came largely from Pakeha voices, who argued that in virtually ignoring the invasion the exhibit rewrote history according to standards of political correctness. In letters to the editor columns in 2000, the invasion continued as a subject for debate. Chapter Six also explores the means by which the 1835 invasion may have come to stand as a replacement for earlier ideas of the conquest of mainland Moriori by Maori, among Pakeha angered by Maori attempts to gain restitution from the Crown.

Chapter Seven concludes the thesis with analysis of its findings. It argues that timing of texts' publication, together with their audiences' reception of the ideas in those texts, played a significant role in shaping this intellectual history across the twentieth century. Percy Smith and Elsdon Best, and H. D. Skinner, for instance, published their theories of Moriori origins and culture for an academic audience at about the same time, yet it was the amateur ethnologists' ideas that were quickly taken up in popular literature, while Skinner's findings did not circulate beyond academia for decades. The thesis suggests that conjunctions occurred between the climate of contemporary bicultural relations and the attention that texts received. It was not until the 1960s, during the emergence of renewed Maori political activism and counter-culture movements that popular literature began to transmit the ideas advanced by opponents of Smith and Best's theories. However, over the next thirty years these ideas persisted in the face of mounting evidence to the contrary, presented in a television documentary, a popular post-contact history of Moriori, as well as a later film documentary. It seemed that lessons learnt in classrooms during the mid-twentieth century continued to underpin some New Zealanders' understandings of the country's pre-contact past. At the century's end, conflicting ideas about Moriori origins and settlement remained in evidence. Yet, whereas once Percy Smith and Elsdon Best's theories held sway, by the end of this period refutations of their ideas had finally contributed to a conceptual shift in relating stories of New Zealand's early past.

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<sup>47</sup> *The Feathers of Peace*.

<sup>48</sup> Nick Barnett, 'The Invasion Evasion', *The Dominion*, 1 November 1999, p. 11.

## 2. Peopling the Past

### Introduction

Chapter Two explores Percy Smith and Elsdon Best's role in popularising the theory that New Zealand's first settlers were non-Maori. It sets their work within both the context of late Victorian ethnological thought and their experiences as colonists. Relevant chapters in the second volume of Smith's *The Lore of the Whare-wananga* and Best's *Transactions of the New Zealand Institute* article, 'Maori and Maruiwi', are key texts in this analysis. It assesses each in depth to identify the characteristics of this alleged pre-Maori people and the 'history' of their interactions with later Polynesian settlers that led to their conquest and exile. It also highlights the link each text makes between this people and Chatham Islands Moriori, an association that proves crucial to the development of ideas about Moriori history. The analysis also compares the texts to establish differences in the authors' approach to their subject, and makes an initial assessment of their relative influence on later stories of pre-contact New Zealand in popular literature, which will be examined more extensively in Chapter Four. Finally, Chapter Two examines Hoani Te Whatahoro's role in this history of ideas, through his presentation to Smith of documents later published as *The Lore of the Whare-wananga*.

### Imagining the Pacific

When European explorers first negotiated the Pacific's waters, the beliefs they brought with them shaped perceptions of the peoples they encountered, and in this they were not alone. As Kerry Howe observes, both explorers and Pacific peoples attempted to understand culture contact by framing their experiences within existing knowledge. The explorers used a classification schema, developed by Enlightenment intellectuals, to place newly encountered people, animals and plants into hierarchical categories. The hierarchy was based on European assumptions that their own physical characteristics, culture and technology were normative, with the variations observed in other peoples indicative of a lower level of civilisation.<sup>1</sup> Late eighteenth and nineteenth century European intellectuals viewed the Pacific as a museum that

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<sup>1</sup> Howe, *Origins*, pp. 15-17.

displayed the early stages of human progress. The origins of this view of Pacific cultures predated evolutionary theory, but the idea that the Pacific modelled initial stages of civilisation dovetailed into later ethnological and anthropological theories of cultural development. The Pacific became a laboratory from which Europeans extracted data in the form of ethnographic writing.<sup>2</sup>

The fundamental classification by which Europeans came to categorise Pacific peoples was based not only on geography but also perceptions of differences between their cultures and physical appearance. Although in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries all Pacific cultures demonstrated levels of progress long since surpassed by European societies – in the eyes of European observers – some were deemed more civilised than others. Melanesian cultures were construed as less advanced and further from the ideal than Polynesian cultures, and therefore framed more negatively. Dark skin pigmentation, one of the determinants for classification of a people as Melanesian, also attracted culturally loaded, negative assumptions from Europeans. Differences in skin colour between people living in the western Pacific and those in the east may have been slight, but to European explorers, missionaries, traders, and writers they signified inherent cultural worth. Accordingly, people designated Melanesian were held to be more savage than those labelled Polynesian, and their societies less advanced than Polynesian cultures.<sup>3</sup>

The idea that New Zealand may have been settled by Melanesians in addition to Polynesians originated with two European explorers in the late eighteenth century.<sup>4</sup> J.R. Forster, a naturalist who sailed with James Cook on his second expedition to the Pacific, was first to arrive at the idea that New Zealand was initially settled by a slightly built, dark-skinned people who were later assimilated by other migrants. In doing so, he used classifications of physical appearance and geography that would be later formalised as Melanesian and Polynesian. He explained differences between cultures and peoples in the Pacific as a consequence of migration by Malays to the Society Islands, Marquesas, Easter Island and New Zealand. These settlers conquered

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<sup>2</sup> K. R. Howe, *Nature, Culture, and History. The “Knowing” of Oceania* (Honolulu, 2000), p. 41.

<sup>3</sup> Serge Tcherkezoff, ‘A Long and Unfortunate Voyage Towards the “Invention” of the Melanesian/Polynesian Distinction 1595-1832’, *The Journal of Pacific History*, 38, 2 (2003), pp.175-196, pp. 182-183, 195; Donald Denoon and Philippa Mein Smith, with Marivic Wyndham, *A History of Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific* (Oxford, 2000), p. 37; Sorrenson, *Manifest Duty*, p. 15.

<sup>4</sup> Best, ‘Maori and Maruiwi’, pp. 438-39.

the remnants of earlier migrations of people from the Western Pacific, though in New Zealand a trace of the indigenous culture remained in the practice of cannibalism by Maori.<sup>5</sup> J. M. Crozet, who sailed with the French expedition led by Marion du Fresne, independently identified “three kinds of men” in New Zealand, whom he classified according to skin colour, physical build, and hair type.<sup>6</sup> His English translator, H. Ling Roth, added: “These observations are very correct. There are two distinct races among the Maories, the black or Papuan, and the yellow or the Malayo-Polynesian.”<sup>7</sup> Percy Smith and Elsdon Best’s theories of a non-Maori settlement of New Zealand reflected Forster and Crozet’s intellectual legacy. Best, in particular, remained true to the original idea with his argument that darker skin pigmentation among some Tuhoe was evidence of Melanesian ancestry.<sup>8</sup> Smith and Best’s theories also carried with them assumptions about the relative value of Melanesian and Polynesian cultures.

Ethnographical descriptions of indigenous peoples by European explorers, missionaries, and officials provided nineteenth century ethnologists and anthropologists with data on which to base their theories of cultural development. The flow of information from the colonies back to the metropole allowed scholars to construct a system of knowledge about the Pacific without leaving their universities. Men like Sir George Grey collected oral traditions and recorded impressions of Pacific peoples to aid their own roles in colonisation projects, but those collections also allowed ethnologists and anthropologists to theorise about cultures and peoples with whom they had never interacted.<sup>9</sup> At the end of the nineteenth century, as amateur ethnologists living on the margins of the field, Percy Smith and Elsdon Best were at once closer to the people whose traditions they collected and yet conscious of a distance between their own endeavours and those of the British academics whose approval they sought.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Johann Reinhold Forster, *Observations Made during a Voyage round the World*, edited by Nicholas Thomas, Harriet Guest and Michael Dettelbach (Honolulu, 1996), pp. 227-28.

<sup>6</sup> H. Ling Roth, (trans.), *Crozet’s Voyage to Tasmania, New Zealand, the Ladrone Islands, and the Philippines in the Years 1771-1772* (London, 1891), p. 28.

<sup>7</sup> Ling Roth, p. 28.

<sup>8</sup> Best, ‘Maori and Maruiwi’, p. 438.

<sup>9</sup> George Stocking Jr., *Victorian Anthropology* (New York, 1987), pp. 79, 81, 86.

<sup>10</sup> Giselle Byrnes, ‘Savages and Scholars: Some Pakeha Perceptions of the Maori 1890s-1920s’, MA thesis (University of Waikato, 1990) pp. 6, 71.

## Salvaging the Past

In 1892, Percy Smith established the Polynesian Society as a colonial forum for the study of human sciences, transplanting a British model to New Zealand soil. The belief that Maori society had suffered irrevocable damage in its colonisation by Britain galvanised Smith. He and other Society members sought to collect information from aging kaumatua and the elderly Pakeha men who recalled the colony's earliest days to safeguard such knowledge for European scholarship.<sup>11</sup> The Society aimed to salvage oral traditions and ethnographical data from a perceived fatal impact of modernity upon Maori society, even though some of its members had themselves undermined Maori resilience in their role as surveyors, soldiers, or colonial administrators.<sup>12</sup> These dual roles of coloniser and collector were compatible because both reinforced the establishment of the New Zealand colony through literal and textual labours. Yet, as amateur ethnologists, Society members did not wholeheartedly welcome the consequences of colonisation for Maori, though the irony of a lament for a culture threatened by their own actions appears to have been lost on these late nineteenth century scholars.

Although the Society had scholarly aims, Peter Gibbons argues that it afforded colonial functionaries, whose numbers formed most of the early membership, the trappings of respectability for their attraction to Maori and other Pacific cultures. Gibbons observes that the Society's collection and publication of material garnered from Maori set the agenda for the study of non-Europeans in New Zealand. Society members' interpretations of Maori traditions and oral histories construed Maori as exotic even though their culture, unlike that of British colonists, was indigenous to New Zealand.<sup>13</sup> However, though Pakeha dominated the Society's membership, Maori members also made contributions to its journal, particularly during Smith's editorship.<sup>14</sup> The Polynesian Society may have been an exponent of colonisation in many respects, but participation by Maori meant that the Society's agenda was not wholly set by colonists. Maori members also contributed to the Society's textual

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<sup>11</sup> Sorrenson, *Manifest Duty*, p. 24.

<sup>12</sup> Giselle Byrnes, *Boundary Markers: land surveying and the colonisation of New Zealand* (Wellington, 2001), p. 5.

<sup>13</sup> Gibbons, 'Non-Fiction', p. 59.

<sup>14</sup> Sorrenson, *Manifest Duty*, p. 34.

representations of Maori for their own reasons, which added another layer of ambiguity to its activities.

Percy Smith's career as a surveyor allowed him the opportunity to indulge his interest in Maori history and culture during expeditions, which meant his participation in the colonisation process and his engagement with collection of oral traditions were intertwined for many years. Although Smith was born in England, most of his schooling was completed in New Plymouth after his family immigrated to New Zealand in 1850. When he was fifteen, Smith became a cadet in the provincial survey department, assisting in the subdivision of land around New Plymouth on expeditions that offered him regular contact with local Maori. Two years later, in 1857, he joined the local militia and subsequently utilised his skills as a surveyor and topographer making sketches of the stockades at Waitara during the conflict in 1858. As his career continued, Smith participated in surveys of the Coromandel, the lower Waikato, and Taranaki during the 1860s and 1870s. He also surveyed Pitt Island in the Chathams group in 1868. His travels afforded him the opportunity to collect information from local Maori, but the demands of a succession of promotions, from chief surveyor of Auckland district in 1877 to surveyor general in 1889, meant that it was not until his retirement in 1900 that Smith was able to develop his interest in ethnology fully.<sup>15</sup>

Smith intended the Polynesian Society to be a forum for the study of "Polynesian anthropology, ethnology, philology, history, manners and customs of the Oceanic races, and the preservation of all that relates to such subjects in a permanent form."<sup>16</sup> As a colonist in nineteenth century New Zealand, Smith was denied the opportunity to formally study ethnology, but he and men like him possessed the field experience lacked by the majority of professional ethnologists and anthropologists of the time. The Polynesian Society provided a means of formalising contributions from amateurs in the field to academics half a world away, and offered a conduit for the flow of ideas between the metropole and the provinces of New Zealand. Smith and co-founder, Edward Tregear, wished to model their organisation on the Royal Society and the Royal Asiatic Society in Britain, and Smith exerted great effort to obtain the Prince of

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<sup>15</sup> Giselle Byrnes, 'Stephenson Percy Smith 1840-1922' in *The Dictionary of New Zealand Biography, Vol. Two, 1870-1900* (Wellington, 1993), pp. 470-71, p. 470.

<sup>16</sup> Percy Smith, MS Papers 1187, Folder 125, quoted by Sorrenson in *Manifest Duty*, p. 24.

Wales as their patron or at least the ‘Royal’ appellation, without success.<sup>17</sup> Yet, the Society’s supply of ethnological data to British academics through the journal and personal correspondence maintained informal links to Britain. And though the study of Maori history and culture grounded the intellectual endeavours of Pakeha members of the Society in a local context, Percy Smith and Elsdon Best continued to look for approval of their ethnological work from professionals in Britain.<sup>18</sup> They were not alone: the long shadow cast by British academia led other Pakeha collectors of the time to position themselves as transcribers rather than scholars.<sup>19</sup> The flow of ideas may have extended in both directions, but a colonial cringe gave greater value to analysis produced far from the colony.

Like Percy Smith, Elsdon Best’s paid employment afforded him opportunities to pursue an intense interest in Maori history and culture, though his career was more erratic than Smith’s path. Best was born at the family farm on Tawa Flat in 1856 and later moved to Wellington, where he briefly worked as a clerk in the Registrar General’s Office. A year later he resigned and moved to Poverty Bay, finding work as a farmer labourer. After a subsequent period of unemployment he joined the Armed Constabulary, and participated in the military operation that destroyed Parihaka in 1881. In the following decade Best became a farm labourer again, then later travelled in the United States on a working holiday, returning to New Zealand to run a Waikanae timber mill with his brother, Walter. The timber mill closed after a slump in timber prices, but in 1891 Percy Smith offered him the chance to become involved in the formation of the Polynesian Society.<sup>20</sup>

Through his work for the Society, and with the encouragement of Smith, Elsdon Best found a firm direction for his energies. When survey expeditions created conflict with Tuhoe in 1892 and 1893, Smith recommended that the Department of Lands and Survey engage Best as a mediator between survey teams and Tuhoe. He also made a

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<sup>17</sup> Sorrenson, *Manifest Duty*, p. 45.

<sup>18</sup> Jock Phillips, ‘Musings in Maoriland – or was there a Bulletin school in New Zealand’, *Historical Studies*, 20, 81 (1983), pp. 520-35, p. 528; Giselle Byrnes, ‘Savages and Scholars’, p. 66.

<sup>19</sup> Chris Hilliard, ‘Textual Museums: Collection and Writing in History and Ethnology, 1900-1950’, in *Fragments: New Zealand Social and Cultural History*, edited by Bronwyn Dalley and Bronwyn Labrum (Auckland, 2000), pp. 118-39, pp. 123-24.

<sup>20</sup> Jeffrey Sissons, ‘Elsdon Best 1856-1931’, in *The Dictionary of New Zealand Biography, Volume Two, 1870-1900* (Wellington, 1993), pp. 39-40, p. 39.

case for Best to use the opportunity to gather information from an iwi that was relatively isolated from colonial settlements. In 1895, Best joined a road-making team in his capacity as mediator, paymaster, storeman, and New Zealand's first professional ethnologist. Despite the demands of multiple roles, Best was able to forge relationships with local Maori. When Smith later arranged for him to become secretary of the Urewera Commission, which was responsible for the subdivision of the Urewera District Native Reserve, Best recorded the Tuhoe history and whakapapa debated during negotiations. This experience resulted in a prolific number of publications in the Society's journal and elsewhere, culminating in his history, *Tuhoe, the children of the mist*, published in 1925.<sup>21</sup> After he left the Urewera in 1910, he was eventually appointed to the Dominion Museum in Wellington, where he continued his ethnographical work.<sup>22</sup>

Before his extended stay in the Urewera, Elsdon Best had been critical of the idea that Melanesian settlers were the first to find New Zealand's shores. However, a short time after he began work in the Bay of Plenty, Best came to believe that variations in skin colour and hair type between some of the Tuhoe he met and other Maori were suggestive of Melanesian physical features. This perception was later reinforced by information from a Tuhoe tohunga, Hamiora Pio, who told Best of a dark-skinned people who came ashore at Whakatane and who were not able to understand Maori. Te Ati Awa Maori of Best's acquaintance had described the ancient arrival of similar strangers. These accounts, together with Best's perceptions of many Tuhoe as having darker skin and frizzier hair than other Maori, led him to develop a theory of successive waves of immigration that included Melanesian voyagers.<sup>23</sup>

### ***The Lore of the Whare-wananga***

Prior to his viewing of Hoani Te Whatahoro's documents in 1909, Percy Smith was critical of Best's theory. Instead, he accepted the majority view that settlement of New Zealand had been an exclusively Eastern Polynesian enterprise.<sup>24</sup> The search for origins of New Zealand's first settlers exercised Smith and other members of the

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<sup>21</sup> Sissons, p. 39; Elsdon Best, *Tuhoe, children of the mist: a sketch of origin, history, myths and beliefs of the Tuhoe tribe of the Maori of New Zealand, with some account of other early tribes of the Bay of Plenty district* (Wellington, 1925).

<sup>22</sup> Sissons, p. 40.

<sup>23</sup> E.W. G. Craig, *Man of the Mist* (Wellington, 1964), pp. 150-51.

<sup>24</sup> Craig, pp. 152-53.

Polynesian Society because it fitted within a wider search to trace human settlement of the Pacific. A lack of evidence from which to draw conclusions hindered the search and contributed to the development of theories influenced by the ethnologists' own cultural traditions. While the theorists and their adherents believed these theories were based on scientific hypothesis, later criticism of their work identified ideas such as the Aryan origins of Maori and the Great Fleet settlement of New Zealand as nothing more substantial than myth.<sup>25</sup> Of all such notions promulgated by Pakeha scholars, the discovery of New Zealand by Kupe and the subsequent arrival of the Great Fleet became the most enduring model of human settlement in the minds of many New Zealanders.<sup>26</sup> The story of the Great Fleet was derived largely from material published in two volumes of *The Lore of the Whare-wananga* by Percy Smith, and based on documents given to him by Hoani Te Whatahoro in 1909.<sup>27</sup> The documents included a description of encounters between Polynesian explorers and pre-Maori settlers in New Zealand, which came to change Smith's views on the origins of the country's first settlers.

Te Whatahoro claimed that the documents he offered Smith were the teachings of Nepia Pohuhu, Moihi Te Matorohanga and other tohunga from the Wairarapa, recorded fifty years prior to his meetings with Smith.<sup>28</sup> However, the provenance of material published in *The Lore of the Whare-wananga* was obscured by successive copies of the documents. Analysis by David Simmons and Bruce Biggs determined that Te Whatahoro compiled the second volume from many sources, much of which may have been based on authentic oral traditions but was not the basis of teachings found in any whare wananga. Nor was it derived from oral traditions held in the area occupied by Ngati Kahungunu as Te Whatahoro had claimed.<sup>29</sup> As Simmons observes, though Te Whatahoro demonstrated a great deal of expertise, criticism from contemporary scholars – including Sir Peter Buck – cast doubt on his reliability.

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<sup>25</sup> Sorrenson, *Maori Origins and Migrations*, pp. 7, 11.

<sup>26</sup> Simmons, *The Great New Zealand Myth*, pp. 3, 7.

<sup>27</sup> Simmons, *The Great New Zealand Myth*, p. 16.

<sup>28</sup> Sorrenson, *Manifest Duty*, p. 37.

<sup>29</sup> David Simmons and Bruce Biggs, 'The Sources of "The Lore of the Whare-wananga"', *JPS*, 79, 1 (1970), pp. 22-42, p. 41.

Simmons also questions Percy Smith's ability to make an objective assessment of material that supported his own migration theories.<sup>30</sup>

Hoani Te Whatahoro's documents represented a treasure trove for Smith in his quest to explain the origins of New Zealand's human settlement. After Smith obtained the documents – likely through fellow Society member, T. W. Downes – he told Elsdon Best that: “The whole has got to be carefully studied, but I think it is going to throw a lot of light on the migrations and on the tangata whenua, who were found here by Toi who came from Hawaiki via Rarotonga”.<sup>31</sup> Best was initially more sceptical of Te Whatahoro's claims than Smith, and his later acceptance of their veracity was probably motivated by several factors unrelated to questions of the documents' provenance. His close friendship with Smith may have made it difficult to pour cold water on the other man's enthusiasm. Study of the documents would provide ample reason to have his position at the Dominion Museum made permanent, at a time when he needed to find a stable income to provide for his new wife, Adelaide. Finally, the information in the documents supported Best's theory of an initial Melanesian settlement of New Zealand.<sup>32</sup> Through their need to believe in the authenticity of Te Whatahoro's documents, Smith and Best also ignored – or failed to see – circumstances that cast doubt on their informant's reliability as a source and his motives in offering the material.

Like Smith and Best, Hoani Te Whatahoro was a member of the Polynesian Society and was therefore familiar with the theories transmitted through the Society's journal. He had converted to Mormonism in 1900, and assisted in translating the *Book of Mormon* into Maori during the 1880s, which also exposed him to non-Maori forms of narrative. However, his familiarity with European forms of storytelling and ethnological analysis failed to sway Smith in his assessment of Te Whatahoro's reliability as a source. In return for participation in discussions with Smith and Best, Te Whatahoro received payment from Smith as well as appreciation of his knowledge. His motives in providing the information contained in the documents may have also

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<sup>30</sup> Simmons, *The Great New Zealand Myth*, p. 8; also see Sorrenson, *Manifest Duty*, p. 38, for a similar conclusion on Smith's reliability.

<sup>31</sup> Letter to Best, December 12 1909, MS Papers 72, folder 5, Alexander Turnbull Library, quoted in Sorrenson, *Manifest Duty*, p. 36.

<sup>32</sup> Craig, pp. 147-48, 150.

been shaped by his involvement in Te Kotahitanga, the Maori political unity movement.<sup>33</sup> The traditions presented by Te Whatahoro as the teachings of tohunga made a clear case for a centuries-old Maori occupancy of New Zealand that appealed not only to Pakeha scholars but also to Maori experiencing marginalisation under British colonisation.<sup>34</sup> In accepting Te Whatahoro's documents as genuine, Smith appeared not to consider either his own motives or those of others.

*The Lore of the Whare-wananga* contained descriptions of interactions between Polynesian explorer Toi and the people he found occupying New Zealand that would come to shape the popular perception of Chatham Islands Moriori. While the first volume concerned itself with "Things Celestial", the second volume was devoted to history.<sup>35</sup> Percy Smith introduced the collection as material recorded by H. T. Whatahoro and Aporo Te Kumeroa, after a political gathering in the Wairarapa in the late 1850s extended into a discussion of Maori migration to New Zealand. He described Te Matorohanga as the principal speaker, who was assisted by two other tohunga. While Smith allowed it was odd that such documents had not surfaced until recently, he claimed that collectors had known of their existence for a longer period. The Polynesian Society managed to obtain them despite their contents being tapu, because "the advance of civilization amongst the people [...] at last induced their owner to allow them to be copied and be preserved in print."<sup>36</sup> Smith's introduction to *The Lore of the Whare-wananga* intimated that readers were privileged to gain access to the results of the Polynesian Society's efforts to secure a valuable, rare source.<sup>37</sup> Inclusion of both a Maori version of the narratives and their English translations gave *The Lore of the Whare-wananga* the gloss of authenticity, while Percy Smith's annotations introduced a veneer of scholarship: effects that lent a credible appearance to the whole for many readers.

The fourth chapter in the second volume, titled 'The Tangata-whenua of New Zealand', would provide later writers with ample material to describe the country's

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<sup>33</sup> Howe, *Origins*, p. 163.

<sup>34</sup> Sorrenson, *Maori Origins and Migrations*, p. 86.

<sup>35</sup> Percy Smith, *The Lore of the Whare-wananga, Vol. I* (New Plymouth, 1913), title page; *Vol. II*, title page.

<sup>36</sup> Smith, *Vol. I*, pp. ii.

<sup>37</sup> Smith, *Vol. I*, p. ii.

first settlers.<sup>38</sup> According to the narrative, which was attributed to Te Matorohanga, these initial migrants appeared after Kupe's discovery of New Zealand, but well before later waves of migration from eastern Polynesia. The description of their physical appearance was, as Sir Peter Buck later observed, incredibly detailed for an account of such antiquity.<sup>39</sup>

Their faces were flat (*paraha*); the eyes were *kanae* (glancing out of the corners of the eyes like lizards), *he tiro pikari* (side-long glancing). The nose was *patiki* (flat in the bridge), and the ridge of the nose was *pongare* (narrow, with the nostrils bulging out) [...] The hair was *torotika* (straight), and some had very *mahora* (lank) hair. Their skins were *puwhero-waitutu* (reddish black, something like *tutu* berries, says the Scribe). They were a *iwi-kiri-ahi* (sticking close to the fire and lazy, sleeping constantly).<sup>40</sup>

Buck pointed out that this description “would have done credit to a trained physical anthropologist and it would have been remarkable as an example of transmission by memorizing over a number of centuries, if it were true.”<sup>41</sup> Percy Smith may have also wondered at the reliability of such a wealth of detail because he did provide a slight qualification in his notes at the chapter's conclusion: “If we are to believe the foregoing account as related by the Sage, it is obvious that we must somewhat alter our ideas as to the Tangata-whenua [...] of New Zealand.”<sup>42</sup> However, Smith was likely to be more concerned at the reaction of other scholars to the account's description of this people's origins than the detailed physical description.

In academic circles at the beginning of the twentieth century, New Zealand's first waves of migration were held to have originated in eastern Polynesia; the idea that Melanesians had also populated the land was very much a minority view.<sup>43</sup> Even Julius Haast, who argued for the existence of a pre-Maori population to explain variations in technological expertise evident in tools found at old settlement sites, believed they were Polynesian.<sup>44</sup> Therefore Smith was probably aware that apparent evidence to the contrary presented in *The Lore of the Whare-wananga* could generate controversy, which may have occasioned his concluding caution. According to the narrative, the first settlers came from the south-west, blown off-course by a gale while

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<sup>38</sup> Smith, *Vol. II*, pp. 71-77 (English translation).

<sup>39</sup> Buck, *The Coming of the Maori*, p. 11.

<sup>40</sup> Smith, *Vol. II*, p. 71.

<sup>41</sup> Buck, p. 11.

<sup>42</sup> Smith, *Vol. II*, p. 77.

<sup>43</sup> Belich, *Making Peoples*, p. 26.

<sup>44</sup> Julius Haast, ‘Moas and Moa Hunters’, *TNZI*, 4 (1871), pp. 66-109, p. 91.

on a fishing expedition. This direction would have the castaways as hailing from Australia rather than Melanesia, but Smith believed it could “only be explained by supposing this to have been their course during the latter part of the voyage”.<sup>45</sup> Smith added that they were “a Polynesian people, with a strong mixture of the Melanesian in them, probably much like the Niue Islanders and the Moriori of the Chatham Islands, but probably more of the Melanesian in them.”<sup>46</sup> In arguing that the first migrants were at least partly Polynesian, Smith managed to keep a foot in each camp.

Although Smith did acknowledge that finding a plausible explanation for the survival of a fishing expedition blown thousands of miles off-course was difficult, he appeared to have convinced himself that it did occur, and that the teachings of the “Sage”, as he referred to Moihī Te Matorohanga, came from an accurate source. He stated that while the eastern Polynesians had been called tangata whenua “it is now clear from the Sage’s teaching that this is only partly true, and the name in future must be confined to these half-Melanesian, half-Polynesian people, that Toi found on his arrival.”<sup>47</sup> Smith’s appropriation of the concept of tangata whenua and his ascription of it to a non-Maori people may have been an attempt to lend credence to the narrative. In claiming tangata whenua status for *The Lore of the Whare-wananga*’s castaways he reconstructed Maori history, though in accordance with what he had come to believe were the genuine teachings of a whare wananga.

Throughout the narrative the eastern Polynesian explorers and their descendants in New Zealand were contrasted favourably with the earlier migrants. According to the account, Hawaiki chief Toi and his companions settled in Tamaki and took local women as their wives, because unlike the castaways – presumably – their group consisted only of men.<sup>48</sup> This custom proved popular with the women because “they were kind to their wives, were possessed of clothing and food, and also because of the superiority of the men in stature and bearing.”<sup>49</sup> The local men, on the other hand, were apparently inclined to murder their wives, were lazy, and offered little

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<sup>45</sup> Smith, *Vol. II*, p. 71.

<sup>46</sup> Smith, *Vol. II*, p. 72.

<sup>47</sup> Smith, *Vol. II*, p. 77.

<sup>48</sup> Smith, *Vol. II*, p. 74.

<sup>49</sup> Smith, *Vol. II*, p. 74.

competition for the handsome explorers.<sup>50</sup> Increasing acts of aggression from the indigenous people eventually provoked the explorers' descendants into declaring war on those iwi who had not married into their families, which had dire consequences for the 'Tangata-whenua'. One iwi, Tini-o-Tai-tawaro, fled to the Chatham Islands to escape the massacres. Only a handful of people from other indigenous iwi managed to flee their attackers, escaping south.<sup>51</sup> Despite their numbers the 'Tangata-whenua' were unable to defend themselves from the superior qualities of descendants of Toi and his companions.

For Smith this account of New Zealand's early history offered explanations for perceived differences in physical appearance within the Maori population.

From the statement made in the above account, to the effect that so many women were incorporated in the Hawaiki immigrants from the Tangata-whenua, we may perhaps see the origin of the idea that the Maori of New Zealand has more of Melanesian blood in him than most of the other branches of the Polynesians.<sup>52</sup>

The narrative also provided Smith with an explanation for perceived differences in appearance and culture between Maori and Chatham Islands Moriori that he observed while surveying in the Chathams group.<sup>53</sup> According to the information in Hoani Te Whatahoro's documents, the Moriori inhabitants of the Chathams were the descendants of a people who shared no ancestry with the eastern Polynesians.<sup>54</sup>

### **'Maori and Maruiwi'**

In the same year Elsdon Best published an article based on the information published in *The Lore of the Whare-wananga*, though his analysis of the first settlers' origins differed from that of Smith, whose remarks were confined to commentary of the original text. Best presented a migration theory that considered aspects of physical anthropology, philology, and material culture analysis in reaching its conclusions. Unfortunately for the veracity of Best's argument, the evidence upon which he based his theory was scanty and relied heavily upon information in *The Lore of the Whare-*

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<sup>50</sup> Smith, *Vol. II*, p. 74.

<sup>51</sup> Smith, *Vol. II*, pp. 74-75.

<sup>52</sup> Smith, *Vol. II*, p. 77.

<sup>53</sup> Smith, *Vol. II*, p. 77.

<sup>54</sup> Smith, *Vol. II*, p. 77.

*wananga*. Best was aware of his lack of evidence, and yet appeared compelled to present what his biographer called his only “firm” theory.<sup>55</sup> He did qualify his argument in the article’s introduction: “No attempt will be made in this brief paper to uphold any special theories as to origins, or to make arbitrary remarks [...] There is by no means sufficient evidence available to justify any person in assuming such an attitude.”<sup>56</sup> However, he then went on to try to build a case for *The Lore of the Whare-wananga*’s first settlers as Fijians.

In stating his case Best wished to highlight what he saw as the existence of “certain customs, implements, and arts not traceable, apparently, to the kindred peoples of Polynesia” among Maori.<sup>57</sup> He began with a description of the first settlers based on Te Matorohanga’s narrative in *The Lore of the Whare-wananga*, though he referred to it as “Maori tradition” rather than acknowledging its authorship.<sup>58</sup> Best also claimed that Maori had called these settlers the “Maruiwi”.<sup>59</sup> In making this claim he set himself apart from Smith, who referred to them as the “Tangata-whenua”. Smith remained critical of Best’s choice of name.<sup>60</sup> However Best did remain true to *The Lore of the Whare-wananga* in his description of the Maruiwi.

In appearance these folk are said to have been tall and slim-built, dark-skinned, having big or protuberant bones, flat-faced and flat-nosed, with upturned nostrils. Their eyes were curiously restless, and they had a habit of glancing sideways without turning the head.<sup>61</sup>

His account of conflict between the Maruiwi and the explorers’ descendants was also close to the original except for the destination of those fleeing south. “The last seen of the remnants of these folk was the passing of six canoes through Raukawa (Cook Strait) on the way to Whare-kauri (Chatham Isles).”<sup>62</sup>

The Maruiwi’s physical appearance was vital to Best’s efforts to establish their origins, because his perception of some Tuhoe Maori as having non-Polynesian features triggered his belief in a Melanesian settlement in New Zealand. He began physical anthropological analysis: “We are also told that the thick projecting lips, the

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<sup>55</sup> Craig, p. 152.

<sup>56</sup> Best, ‘Maori and Maruiwi’, p. 435.

<sup>57</sup> Best, ‘Maori and Maruiwi’, p. 435.

<sup>58</sup> Best, ‘Maori and Maruiwi’, p. 435.

<sup>59</sup> Best, ‘Maori and Maruiwi’, p. 435.

<sup>60</sup> Craig, p. 154.

<sup>61</sup> Best, ‘Maori and Maruiwi’, p. 435.

<sup>62</sup> Best, ‘Maori and Maruiwi’, p. 436.

bushy frizzy hair, dark skin, and flat nose often seen among the Maori are derived from Maruiwi. The writer has seen many natives showing these peculiarities among the Tuhoe Tribe”.<sup>63</sup> Best followed with a tradition gained from Ngati Awa Maori, relating to the arrival of “black-skinned” people in Whakatane about 500 years ago, whom he presumed were “waifs from some island of Melanesia”.<sup>64</sup> He added: “Forster’s description of the natives of Malekula, as seen during Cook’s second voyage, reminds us of the Maruiwi of Maori tradition.”<sup>65</sup> A quoted description of this people was included in Best’s text, whom Forster categorised as having dark brown skin and woolly hair. Best concluded the quote with Forster’s comparison between the people encountered on the island and monkeys.

In his own description of the Maruiwi, Best had stated that if the tradition was reliable then as a people they were “much inferior to the Maori in appearance and general culture.”<sup>66</sup> Although he did qualify his acceptance of this tradition in his text, he had come to accept the provenance of Hoani Te Whatahoro’s documents. His argument for the Maruiwi as a Melanesian presence in New Zealand relied heavily upon the physical description in *The Lore of the Whare-wananga*. Negative stereotypes of Melanesian cultures were interwoven in Best’s thesis that Melanesian castaways made their home in New Zealand, and were subsequently driven to the Chatham Islands by the emergence of a superior culture.

For Best, the Maruiwi theory explained not only variations in physical appearance among Maori but also perceived non-Polynesian characteristics in Maori culture. Best’s analysis of his evidence drew on contemporary ethnological practice, beginning with philology. His comparative analysis of Maori and fragments of the “Maruiwi tongue” handed down in oral traditions found that the Maruiwi vocabulary did not support his Melanesian origins theory.<sup>67</sup> However, he explained their similarity with Maori as an unwitting corruption by those who transmitted the tradition, who must have changed the words to sounds more familiar in their own language. He concluded that “taking the circumstances into consideration, the

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<sup>63</sup> Best, ‘Maori and Maruiwi’, p. 436.

<sup>64</sup> Best, ‘Maori and Maruiwi’, p. 437.

<sup>65</sup> Best, ‘Maori and Maruiwi’, p. 437.

<sup>66</sup> Best, ‘Maori and Maruiwi’, p. 436.

<sup>67</sup> Best, ‘Maori and Maruiwi’, p. 438.

evidence of language, in the matter of the origin of Maruiwi, is not to be relied on.”<sup>68</sup> Despite Best’s declaration that he would make no attempt to make “arbitrary remarks on any of the debatable subjects discussed herein”, he was prepared to disallow evidence when it did not suit his argument.<sup>69</sup>

Although comparative linguistics proved unsatisfactory, Best appeared more confident in identifying the vestiges of Maruiwi influence in Maori material culture. His first example of a lingering Maruiwi influence was in Maori fortifications. According to Best, the knowledge to build earthwork defences and ramparts did not come from eastern Polynesian with Toi and his companions, but was a practice already followed by the Maruiwi. This was “one matter in connection with the Maruiwi aborigines that seems to show that in one direction at least they may have exhibited intelligence of a fairly high order.”<sup>70</sup> Best claimed that such fortifications were numerous only in the North Island of New Zealand and the island of Viti Levu in Fiji. He was prepared to consider that the practice might have evolved locally among Maori, but gave greater weight to the idea that Maruiwi were responsible. Best’s proposition that cultural change occurred in reaction to culture contact rather than as an internal process stemmed from his correspondence with Cambridge ethnologist W. H. R. Rivers, who was an exponent of diffusionism during that period. Best looked to Rivers for approval of his work and his standing as an ‘expert’ on Maori culture.<sup>71</sup>

The Maruiwi influence was also held by Best to be present in the practice of cannibalism, with cultural diffusion to blame for Maori acquiring the habit. Best suggested that because cannibalism was rare in the Society Islands, “whence the Maori of New Zealand came”, but was common in Fiji, the Maruiwi were the source of the practice.<sup>72</sup>

It is fairly clear that the Maori did not bring this shocking custom in any excessive form with him to New Zealand. Did he borrow it from the Maruiwi? Tradition shows that the aborigines were of a lower plane of culture than that on which the Maori stood. The Maori immigrants took large numbers of

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<sup>68</sup> Best, ‘Maori and Maruiwi’, p. 438.

<sup>69</sup> Best, ‘Maori and Maruiwi’, p. 438.

<sup>70</sup> Best, ‘Maori and Maruiwi’, p. 439.

<sup>71</sup> Craig, p. 157.

<sup>72</sup> Best, ‘Maori and Maruiwi’, p. 440.

Maruiwi women [...] Knowing as we do the effect of such a crossing of peoples, does it not appear probable that some of the Maruiwi customs were followed by the mixed folk that succeeded them?”<sup>73</sup>

In this passage Best did not qualify his Melanesian origins argument; the catalyst for widespread acts of cannibalism was mooted but the Fijian origins of the Maruiwi were assumed. A negative influence of Melanesian cultural traits upon a Polynesian culture was also implicit within the analysis.

Other examples of the apparent influence of Maruiwi culture upon the descendants of the eastern Polynesian explorers were more positive. Best claimed that the use of weapons not found in the explorers’ original culture, such as a long spear and a curved whalebone weapon, were attributable to the Maruiwi.<sup>74</sup> The discovery of a bow in a drainage ditch excavation near Auckland apparently also indicated that the Maruiwi may have used a weapon not known to Polynesians but common in Melanesia. Best had a rationale for its rejection as a weapon of choice by Maori: “When the Maori fought, he loved to feel his weapon bite into the skull of his enemy”.<sup>75</sup> So, though Maori had once seen the bow and arrow in action, they had rejected it for aesthetic reasons.

That is how the bow has been forgotten by the Maori people, and why the natives of Cook’s time were ignorant of it. The knowledge their ancestors had of it was preserved only in old, old traditions handed down orally from one generation to another by the wise men of the *whare wananga*, the trained and close-lipped record-keepers of the Maori school of learning.<sup>76</sup>

This explanation for the late emergence of the traditions contained in *The Lore of the Whare-wananga* offered a defence for criticism of Hoani Te Whatahoro’s documents, and may also be read as an attempt to shore up a “firm” theory that had its basis in shaky evidence.

Although the *Transactions of the New Zealand Institute* article presented Best’s Maruiwi theory in greatest detail, he published a second paper on the subject in the Society’s journal in 1928. Also titled ‘Maori and Maruiwi’, it differed from the first text by arguing that the Maruiwi fortified their settlements with wooden stockades rather than earthworks. Best now considered that “if the Maruiwi people were as

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<sup>73</sup> Best, ‘Maori and Maruiwi’, p. 440.

<sup>74</sup> Best, ‘Maori and Maruiwi’, p. 441.

<sup>75</sup> Best, ‘Maori and Maruiwi’, p. 443.

<sup>76</sup> Best, ‘Maori and Maruiwi’, p. 443.

ignorant and improvident in their mode of life as Maori tradition makes them out to have been, then it is improbable that they had advanced far in the arts of fortification.”<sup>77</sup> Six years later, in *The Maori As He Was*, Best still subscribed to the idea of a pre-Maori settlement by Melanesians, but distanced himself from both the name ‘Maruiwi’ and the characteristics he originally argued distinguished them from the Polynesian explorers.<sup>78</sup> Best explained that: “These people are alluded to by the Maori as ‘Mouriuri’ and ‘Maruiwi’, but probably had no collective name for themselves.”<sup>79</sup> And on the matter of their character: “I suspect that the description of the Mouriuri people has become confused with that of some inferior folk encountered by the ancestors of the Maori in far-distant lands.”<sup>80</sup> Maori tradition was at fault in these matters, according to Best, rather than his own skills in analysis. H. D. Skinner’s public refutations of mainland Moriori theories – examined in depth in the next chapter – may have caused this change of heart, as may private criticism of Best’s analysis from other Society members.<sup>81</sup> However, by the time Best had an apparent change of heart regarding some details in his original portrait of the Maruiwi, mainland Moriori already populated the pages of popular stories of New Zealand’s pre-contact past.<sup>82</sup>

### **Smith and Best’s Legacy**

Within their key texts, Percy Smith and Elsdon Best presented the case for an initial settlement of New Zealand by castaways of at least partly Melanesian origins, who were later conquered by members of an emergent Maori culture. The remnant population was forced to flee to the Chatham Islands, and were the ancestors of modern Moriori. The texts differed in their emphasis on the importance of this first settlement. The second volume of *The Lore of the Whare-wananga* comprised a broad history of the eastern Polynesians who discovered and settled New Zealand. Smith believed the material contained in Hoani Te Whatahoro’s documents provided answers to the search for Maori origins and detailed a migration sequence that

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<sup>77</sup> Elsdon Best, ‘Maori and Maruiwi’, *JPS*, 37, 2 (1928), pp. 175-221.

<sup>78</sup> Elsdon Best, *The Maori As He Was* (Wellington, 1934), pp. 22, 24.

<sup>79</sup> Best, *The Maori As He Was*, p. 22.

<sup>80</sup> Best, *The Maori As He Was*, p. 24.

<sup>81</sup> Skinner, *Morioris of Chatham Islands*; H. D. Skinner and William Baucke, *The Morioris* (Honolulu, 1928); Sorrenson, *Manifest Duty*, p. 38.

<sup>82</sup> This will be traced in detail in Chapter Four.

explained New Zealand's earliest history.<sup>83</sup> Intermarriage between the 'Tangata-whenua' and the explorers, and their descendents provided Smith with an explanation for perceived non-Polynesian physical characteristics within the contemporary Maori population. However, the 'Tangata-whenua' were only one part of the story of the Great Fleet, and therefore probably not Smith's main focus in his annotations of the text. On the other hand, Best's central aim was establishing the origins of the Maruiwi and their contributions to Maori culture. For Best, the discovery of the Maruiwi by Polynesian explorers was not the preamble to a larger story, but the main event.

The texts did share a negative construction of these first New Zealanders, which had implications for perceptions of Chatham Islands Moriori. Both the 'Tangata-whenua' and the Maruiwi fared poorly in comparison with the eastern Polynesians. While they were hapless castaways set adrift in a storm, and only found New Zealand's shores by accident, the later settlers arrived as a result of skilled, purposeful exploration.<sup>84</sup> The 'Tangata-whenua' and Maruiwi had barely adequate skills in gathering food and building shelters (though in his first article Best suggested that they did have the ability to build effective earthwork fortifications). The explorers' male descendants were far more popular with the indigenous women, who would choose them over men from their own group as kinder, more enterprising husbands. Most importantly, despite their superior numbers, the indigenous people were overwhelmed by the later settlers and forced to flee the country. These survivors were held to have settled the Chatham Islands, presumably establishing a similar culture on those islands to that they had left behind. According to Smith and Best, such was the stuff of which the ancestors of Chatham Islands Moriori were made.

Two critics of Percy Smith and Elsdon Best's theories of Moriori origins and culture, aware of their impact on modern perceptions of Moriori, have sought to identify which of the men was most influential in shaping erroneous ideas about this aspect of history. Peter Gibbons argues that Best's efforts were more persuasive than Smith, because Best attempted to weigh his argument with as much evidence as he could muster, whereas Smith's input was confined to a dramatic narrative.<sup>85</sup> Michael King

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<sup>83</sup> Smith, *Vol. II*, pp. v-vi.

<sup>84</sup> Best, 'Maori and Maruiwi', p. 436; Smith, *Vol. II*, p. 71.

<sup>85</sup> Gibbons, 'Non-Fiction', p. 60.

also made a case for Best as the prime influence, arguing that his Maruiwi theory had greatest impact on the retelling of New Zealand history for decades.<sup>86</sup> Kerry Howe observes that Best's construction of Maruiwi was his most substantial contribution to the Great Fleet myth.<sup>87</sup> However, David Simmons' analysis of versions of the Great Fleet story found that *The Lore of the Whare-wananga* was the original source of that migration narrative and the story of Chatham Islands' human settlement.<sup>88</sup> As will be seen in Chapter Four, both Smith and Best's ideas about early human settlement and about Moriori were transmitted in narrative form through general histories and school texts. When reading those texts it becomes difficult to separate out either man's relative influence, because both exerted significant influence on stories of New Zealand's early history.

Looking to either Percy Smith or Elsdon Best's influence to explain the transmission of erroneous information about Moriori has obscured Hoani Te Whatahoro's role in the process. In his thesis on the origins of the 'Moriori myth', Peter Clayworth highlights Te Whatahoro's participation, arguing that the myth was not solely due to Smith and Best's endeavours, nor to changes in Maori oral traditions as a result of colonisation, but as an interaction between these two processes.<sup>89</sup> Te Whatahoro's representation of oral traditions may have been motivated by a desire to provide evidence of a long-established claim for Maori to New Zealand by right of conquest and occupation, for personal reasons, or a combination of both.<sup>90</sup> Yet his documents provided Smith and Best with a springboard from which to launch their own theories of New Zealand's early history. Mainland Moriori theories did not originate in one text, but developed as a result of contact between Maori and Pakeha scholars within the context of an ongoing process of colonisation.<sup>91</sup> However, Smith and Best's reputations as scholars of Maori oral tradition gave their theories an authority that would see ideas of mainland Moriori taken up as historical fact in popular literature. Te Whatahoro's involvement was crucial, but by staking their reputations to his documents, stories of mainland Moriori became Smith and Best's legacy.

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<sup>86</sup> King, *Moriori*, p. 172.

<sup>87</sup> Howe, *Origins*, p. 164.

<sup>88</sup> Simmons, *The Great New Zealand Myth*, pp. 64-65.

<sup>89</sup> Clayworth, p. 277.

<sup>90</sup> Howe, *Origins*, p. 163.

<sup>91</sup> Clayworth, p. 279.

### 3. A Divided Society

#### Introduction

Chapter Three examines texts written by members of the Polynesian Society whose analyses contradicted Percy Smith and Elsdon Best's Moriori theories. Alexander Shand's book *The Moriori People of the Chatham Islands*, a collection of articles about Moriori oral traditions and culture that preceded Smith and Best's work, is the first text to be evaluated. The chapter assesses *The Moriori People of the Chatham Islands*' contribution to contemporary ethnological study of Moriori, and examines Shand's collaboration with Moriori elder Hirawanu Tapu to collect the traditions. While Shand's work preceded the publication of *The Lore of the Whare-wananga*, the other texts assessed in Chapter Three were written in response to Smith and Best's theories. In particular, H. D. Skinner's doctoral thesis, *The Morioris of Chatham Islands*, set out to provide an analysis of Moriori material culture that demonstrated the flaws in Smith and Best's arguments. The chapter traces influences on H. D. Skinner's contribution to theories of Moriori history and culture, and explores his attempts to correct erroneous information about Moriori in the public domain. It then outlines criticism of Best's Melanesian origins theory by other Society members, including H. W. Williams, and examines Sir Peter Buck's contribution to the debate in more depth. Lastly, Chapter Three considers possible reasons for the continuing popularity of Smith and Best's theories in the face of criticism of their work by other Society members.

#### Rekohu

Maori voyagers were the first to discover the Chathams, probably in either the thirteenth or fourteenth century, and named the island group Rekohu for its persistent mists.<sup>1</sup> Although there is no evidence to rule out deliberate colonisation, the initial settlement was most likely to have been the result of an accidental voyage in which a group of up to fifty women and men in a double-hulled canoe were blown off-course from their original

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<sup>1</sup> King, *Moriori*, pp. 18, 22.

destination.<sup>2</sup> The demands presented by life on an isolated group of tiny islands required a rapid cultural adaptation by the settlers. They based their economy on the year-round access to fur seals and the harvest of other marine resources such as shellfish and seabirds. The wealth of protein sources supported a relatively large human population on the islands; this abundance may have also contributed to low levels of conflict between kin-groups. Archaeological evidence points to an absence of warfare, indicating that the social structure of Moriori culture was more egalitarian than other Polynesian cultures.<sup>3</sup> Moriori tradition held that their ancestor Nunuku-whenua abolished warfare, which led to the ritualising of conflict into single-combat until the first blood was drawn, and archaeological evidence does not contradict this tradition.<sup>4</sup> Controlling aggression between kin-groups contributed to the success of Moriori adaptation to the exigencies of life in the Chatham Islands' harsh environment, and represented a departure from almost all other Polynesian cultures.<sup>5</sup>

The European discovery of the Chatham Islands occurred as a result the British brig, *Chatham*, being blown off-course in 1791. The arrival of Lieutenant William Broughton and his crew at Kaingaroa Harbour triggered a tense encounter between local Moriori and the Englishmen, which ended with the death of a Moriori man, Tamakaroro. Decades later, Moriori elders told Alexander Shand the belief that the strangers were women, who could be taken by force to the local settlement, motivated the attack on the sailors. Within twenty years of this first contact, the Chatham Islands had become a port of call for sealing gangs.<sup>6</sup> Interaction with Europeans provided Moriori with new food resources – pigs and potatoes – but undermined one of their primary sources of food: seals. Local fur seal populations had been managed carefully by Moriori, who only killed the males and took care to remove the bodies from the rookeries for processing. European sealers killed entire populations and left their remains at the site, driving away those seals who managed to survive. The sealers supplemented their own diets with waterfowl and

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<sup>2</sup> King, *Moriori*, p. 22; Douglas G. Sutton, 'A Culture History', p. 70.

<sup>3</sup> Sutton, 'A Culture History', pp. 83, 85.

<sup>4</sup> King, *Moriori*, pp. 26-27.

<sup>5</sup> Sutton, 'A Culture History', p. 84.

<sup>6</sup> King, *Moriori*, pp. 39-44, 48; Philippa Mein Smith, *A Concise History of New Zealand* (Cambridge, 2005), p.37.

seabirds, reducing another important source of food on the islands. Exposure to diseases brought by the sealers also had an impact on Moriori survival. By 1835, approximately one fifth of Moriori had died in measles and influenza epidemics on the islands, leaving an estimated population of 1600. The sealers' ranks drew from convicted criminals and others living on the margins of their own society, and their contempt for Moriori and habitual ill-treatment of the women, men and children they encountered also destabilised Moriori society.<sup>7</sup>

The invasion of the Chatham Islands by members of two sub-tribes from Taranaki iwi Te Ati Awa, Ngati Mutunga and Ngati Tama, provided a further threat to the survival of Moriori.<sup>8</sup> In November 1835, the captain of a British brig was persuaded either by force or by payment – a matter disputed at the time and since – to ferry two shiploads of 400 people from Port Nicholson to Chatham Island. Once recovered from the voyage's deprivations, Ngati Mutunga and Ngati Tama set out to establish their claim to the islands. After debating the issue at a three-day gathering, Moriori men rejected violence as an option and held to the observance of Nunuku's law. Approximately 300 Moriori were killed during Te Ati Awa efforts to establish ownership of the Chatham Islands through the right of conquest. The remaining population of 1300 people were enslaved, and in the following seventeen years until their manumission in 1863 at least a further 1000 died.<sup>9</sup>

The Chatham Islands were proclaimed part of New Zealand in 1842. However, the islands' first British representative, Archibald Shand, found it difficult to assert his authority over Chatham Islands Maori and was unable to halt assaults on Moriori slaves by their owners. Europeans living on the islands also offered Shand no support in his attempts to see British law observed. In the 1850s, Moriori began petitioning Sir George Grey for recognition that Moriori were the rightful owners of Rekohu, which they argued was taken from them in an unprovoked attack by Te Ati Awa Maori. Further petitions sent to Grey in 1862 asked for an end to Moriori slavery and restoration of their land. In 1863, the new resident magistrate, Captain William Thomas, declared that slavery in the

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<sup>7</sup> King, *Moriori*, pp. 49-50.

<sup>8</sup> Sutton, 'A Culture History', p. 87.

<sup>9</sup> King, *Moriori*, pp. 57-62, 12; Mein Smith, p. 37.

Chathams was to end. Although Moriori regained their freedom, Chatham Islands Maori continued to hold claim to most of the land not sold on to European settlers. A Native Land Court hearing in 1870 awarded more than 15 000 hectares to Maori claimants, and just 240 hectares to Moriori, further undermining the viability of Moriori communities. With a total population of just under 100 people at this time, Chatham Islands Moriori approached extinction as a people.<sup>10</sup>

Hirawanu Tapu was 11 when Ngati Mutunga and Ngati Tama Maori invaded the Chatham Islands. Enslaved by Ngati Tama, he became proficient in writing and speaking Maori, learned some English, and retained the ability to understand Moriori. In 1862, two years after he gained an early release from slavery, Moriori elders chose Tapu to record their traditions and genealogies during a series of meetings. European settlers and visitors later came to regard Tapu as the spokesman for Moriori. During their stay on Chatham Island both Percy Smith and Edward Tregear met with Tapu, but it was his collaboration with Alexander Shand that enabled the survival of Moriori traditions and history at a time when Moriori culture appeared to be near its demise. His tendency to favour some of his informants over others, and inability to record their knowledge in written Moriori, was criticised by Pakeha Chatham Islander William Baucke, who later contributed to a second book on Moriori culture by H. D. Skinner.<sup>11</sup> However, Tapu's efforts made a profound contribution to the preservation of knowledge regarding Moriori history and customs. Michael King argued that his death in 1900 represented a far greater threat to the survival of Moriori culture than Tommy Solomon's death in 1933.<sup>12</sup> His legacy survived in Shand's text, *The Moriori People of the Chatham Islands*.

Alexander Shand, son of the islands' first resident magistrate, grew up on the family farm at Te Wakaru on Chatham Island, and spent much of his life studying the Moriori. Employed as a clerk to the magistrate, he also served judges in Native Land Court sittings in his capacity as a licensed Maori interpreter. His collaboration with Hirawanu Tapu in

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<sup>10</sup> King, *Moriori*, pp. 93-95, 114-115, 118, 123, 132.

<sup>11</sup> Michael King, 'Hirawanu Tapu, ?-1900', in *The Dictionary of New Zealand Biography, Vol. One, 1769-1869* (Wellington, 1990), pp. 426-27, p. 426; Skinner and Baucke, *The Morioris*, p. 358.

<sup>12</sup> King, 'Hirawanu Tapu', p. 427.

recording oral traditions and history prevented this knowledge being lost with the deaths of Moriori elders who had survived the invasion and its aftermath.<sup>13</sup> Shand published his collection to benefit future Pakeha scholars in their studies of Moriori culture, believing that the Moriori would cease to exist within two generations.<sup>14</sup>

### ***The Moriori People of the Chatham Islands***

The chapters within *The Moriori People of the Chatham Islands* were originally published as a series of articles in the *Journal of the Polynesian Society*, from its third issue.<sup>15</sup> This meant that in its earliest days, the Society's journal voiced ideas about Moriori history and culture that were contrary to what Percy Smith, as editor, would later publish under his own name. Alexander Shand made it clear from the text's first page that he believed Moriori shared a common ancestry with Maori, and that theirs was a Polynesian culture. His aim was to produce a study that allowed "a comparison, however rough, with their relatives of other branches of the Polynesian Race. From their traditionary [sic] account of themselves, there is little doubt that the Morioris form a branch of the same race of Polynesians who colonised New Zealand".<sup>16</sup>

Shand's analysis of Moriori culture included their physical appearance, which he characterised as having a "strong resemblance to the Maoris" though their features possessed "more of a Jewish cast than even that people".<sup>17</sup> His perceptiveness as an ethnographer was not assisted by his apparent belief that the Lost Tribe of Israel found its way to Polynesia. However, as an amateur scholar who spent his life on Chatham Island and who had not absorbed local Maori contempt for Moriori, his work arguably provided the most intimate and least biased observations of Moriori culture from the last decades of the nineteenth century. However, his belief that "Morioris do not appear to have had the same amount of energy or vivacity as the Maoris" reflected one other constraint on

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<sup>13</sup> Hugh Stringer, 'Alexander Shand 1840-1910, in *The Dictionary of New Zealand Biography, Vol. Two 1870-1900* (Wellington, 1993), pp. 454-55, p. 454.

<sup>14</sup> Shand, *The Moriori People*, p. 1; King, *Moriori*, p. 136.

<sup>15</sup> Alexander Shand, 'The Moriori People of the Chatham Islands: their traditions and history', *JPS*, 3, (1894), pp.76-92, 121-33, 187-98; 4 (1895), pp. 33-46, 89-98, 161-76, 209-25; 5 (1896), pp. 13-32, 73-91, 131-41, 195-211; 6 (1897), pp. 11-18, 145-51, 161-68; 7 (1898), pp. 73-88; 19 (1910), pp. 206-17.

<sup>16</sup> Shand, *The Moriori People*, pp. 1-3, 6-11.

<sup>17</sup> Shand, *The Moriori People*, p. 2.

his knowledge: Shand had not known Moriori prior to their slavery. Instead he observed a people dealing with the considerable challenges presented by the invasion and its aftermath.<sup>18</sup>

Despite the disruptions of events on the Chathams in the mid-nineteenth century and consequent changes in Moriori culture, knowledge of pre-invasion cultural practices and beliefs remained intact for the lifespan of those born before the 1830s. Shand was able to include information on social structures, marriage, religion, and technology in his analysis.<sup>19</sup> However, most of *The Moriori People of the Chatham Islands* was devoted to his collection of Moriori oral traditions. His primary source for these was Hirawanu Tapu, who interviewed Moriori elders. Three versions were presented in the text: Maori; an approximation of Moriori; and Shand's English translation, which he aimed to keep as close to the Maori form as possible rather than adapt it for a European audience.<sup>20</sup> Shand made their method explicit at the beginning of his third chapter.

It may be well to state that the stories in [that chapter] were written by Hirawanu Tapu in Maori, in the first instance, as taken down from information supplied by the old Morioris. This was done owing to his inability to write it in Moriori, for he was unable to spell and shew [sic] the peculiarities of his own language. Subsequently he and I went over and corrected all the stories throughout, so far as possible; but there can be little doubt that the subject has suffered somewhat in the process [...] It is now in a semi-Maori form, and it will be noticed that it is impossible to make an exact rendering of some of the Moriori words and idioms. The text has, however, been followed as closely as possible, both in Maori and English.<sup>21</sup>

Shand's efforts to retain the essence of the traditions in translation were in contrast to Smith's treatment of oral traditions, which he would rework if he thought it necessary for what he viewed as dramatic effect.<sup>22</sup>

When Percy Smith endorsed the version of Chatham Islands settlement presented by his informant Hoani Te Whatahoro, the findings of Alexander Shand's analysis of Moriori culture were already in the public domain. Smith addressed the discrepancies between his

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<sup>18</sup> Shand, *The Moriori People*, p. 46; King, *Moriori*, p. 67.

<sup>19</sup> Shand, *The Moriori People*, pp. 3-17.

<sup>20</sup> Shand, *The Moriori People*, p. 31.

<sup>21</sup> Shand, *The Moriori People*, p. 31.

<sup>22</sup> Gibbons, 'Non-Fiction', p. 62.

thesis and Shand's contention when he edited *The Moriori People of the Chatham Islands* for posthumous publication in 1911. Chapter Fifteen, published in the *Journal of the Polynesian Society* after Shand's death in 1910 and included in *The Moriori People of the Chatham Islands* in 1911, was written by Smith.<sup>23</sup> This addition allowed Smith to correct what he saw as mistakes, discrepancies, and gaps within Shand's knowledge, made apparent by information brought to light since Shand's death by a "young scribe" from a *whare wananga*.<sup>24</sup>

Owing to the lamented death of Mr. Alex. Shand, it devolves on another pen to complete his work on the Moriori people. In doing so we shall here cite the Maori accounts of the exodus of the Morioris from New Zealand as they were preserved in one of the ancient *Whare-wananga* [...] It is now made use of for the first time in explaining some of the difficulties Mr. Shand always experienced in accounting for the discovery of and the early settlement on the Chatham Islands.<sup>25</sup>

Smith went on to summarise *The Lore of the Whare-wananga's* account of Polynesian explorers' discovery of inhabitants from "the Western Pacific" who had a "fairly strong Melanesian element in them".<sup>26</sup> He argued that this account filled in the gaps he believed were present in the Moriori traditions collected by Shand, and insisted that "the Maoris were well acquainted with the early settlement of the Chathams, though it is a remarkable thing that this knowledge has not become public until now."<sup>27</sup> As editor of a posthumous publication, Smith had the opportunity to undermine Shand's argument that Moriori originated from Polynesia by placing his version of events in the closing chapter. However, it is likely that Smith did not see his editorial contributions as undermining Shand's argument on origins but as updating them in the light of new evidence.

In 1904, Shand himself appeared to contradict his own position in a paper given to the New Zealand Institute. Although he suggested initially that Moriori were Polynesian, he was also willing to entertain the idea that they may not have originated in the eastern Pacific. Observing that Maori and Moriori migration traditions did not mesh

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<sup>23</sup> Percy Smith in Shand, pp. 207-218; Percy Smith, 'The Moriori People of the Chatham Islands: their traditions and history', *JPS*, 12, 4 (1910), pp. 206-217.

<sup>24</sup> Percy Smith in Shand, p. 207.

<sup>25</sup> Percy Smith in Shand, p. 207.

<sup>26</sup> Percy Smith in Shand, p. 209.

<sup>27</sup> Percy Smith in Shand, p. 210.

chronologically, Shand suggested that Moriori migration may have preceded Maori settlement by some years.<sup>28</sup>

In connection with this it may be worthy of remark that during the stay of the Hauhau prisoners at the Chathams many of the last batch [...] came from Tarawera, Te Whaiti, and thereabouts, while several of their women were almost the counterpart of the Moriori in physique, but more particularly noticeable in the same kind of frizzy semi-Fijian style of hair, so much so that a Maori friend remarked ‘They are exactly like Moriori women’ – quite different from the ordinary Maori women of his tribe the Ngatiawa.<sup>29</sup>

It appears that Shand was not so attached to the idea of Polynesian origins for Moriori that he was unwilling to entertain a contrary hypothesis. Although Smith informed him of Hoani Te Whatahoro’s documents in 1909, a few months before Shand’s death, his paper demonstrates that he was already open to the idea of Melanesian origins.<sup>30</sup> This is difficult to reconcile with statements made in the introduction to *The Moriori People of the Chatham Islands*, in which he sited Moriori within the “Polynesian Race”.<sup>31</sup>

Shand’s readiness to consider physical characteristics as potential evidence against his own hypothesis, and his perception that Moriori and Maori genealogies could yield precise dates for settlement, demonstrated intellectual influences he shared with Percy Smith and Elsdon Best.<sup>32</sup> The work of all three illustrated a connection made in late Victorian ethnological thinking between physical anthropology and the study of folklore, whereby the two fields were thought to yield supporting evidence for origins.<sup>33</sup> Like Smith and Best, Shand attempted to identify Moriori origins through analysis of oral traditions and cultural practices, though he differed from the other men in his focus on Moriori rather than Maori traditions. Whether he would have repudiated his Polynesian origins theory in the light of *The Lore of the Whare-wananga* will remain unknown.

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<sup>28</sup> Alexander Shand, ‘The Early History of the Morioris’, *TNZI*, 37, 1 (1904), pp. 144-56, p. 145.

<sup>29</sup> Shand, ‘The Early History’, p. 146.

<sup>30</sup> Percy Smith in Shand, p. 207.

<sup>31</sup> Shand, *The Moriori People*, p. 1.

<sup>32</sup> Shand, ‘The Early History’, p. 146; King, *Moriori*, p. 19; Te Maire Tau, ‘Matauranga Maori as an epistemology’, in *Histories, Power and Loss*, edited by Andrew Sharp and Paul McHugh (Wellington, 2001), pp. 61-74, p. 63.

<sup>33</sup> George W. Stocking, *After Tylor. British Social Anthropology 1888-1951* (Madison, 1995), p. 104.

## An Anthropologist on the Chathams

In his role as Alexander Shand's editor, Smith had the opportunity to insert his preferred version of Moriori origins within a text that presented a credible argument for Moriori as a Polynesian people. However, he had no such means of control over H. D. Skinner's doctoral thesis, which set out to challenge Smith and Best's theories of Moriori origins and history. Percy Smith was a formative influence in Skinner's early interest in Maoritanga through his friendship with Skinner's father, William. W. H. Skinner had been a founding member of the Polynesian Society, and fostered his son's emerging interest in cultural artefacts through expeditions to local pa sites.<sup>34</sup> With little possibility that he could pursue his interest in ethnology as a career in New Zealand, the younger Skinner chose to study arts subjects as an undergraduate, relegating his passion to a spare-time pursuit.

In the British Empire prior to World War One, ethnology and anthropology were only taught at Oxford, Cambridge, and in London. Skinner's enlistment in the New Zealand Expeditionary Force in 1914 eventually led to an opportunity to study anthropology at Cambridge.<sup>35</sup> Wounded in the Gallipoli campaign, H. D. Skinner spent months convalescing in an English hospital before being classified as unfit for further service. After his discharge from the New Zealand Division, Skinner enrolled as a post-graduate student at Cambridge University to study under Alfred Haddon, the eminent British anthropologist of the period.<sup>36</sup>

At this time, British anthropological theory and practice was in the process of shedding its original influence, social evolutionism, and about to embrace approaches developed by Bronislaw Malinowski and A. R. Radcliffe Brown. An 1898 expedition to Torres Strait, led by Alfred Haddon, had introduced fieldwork as a means of gathering data for ethnological and anthropological studies. This departed from the traditional practice of

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<sup>34</sup> J. D. Freeman, 'Henry Devenish Skinner: A Memoir' in *Anthropology in the South Seas*, edited by J. D. Freeman and W.R. Geddes (New Plymouth, 1959), pp. 9-27, p. 10.

<sup>35</sup> Atholl Anderson, 'Henry Devenish Skinner', in *The Dictionary of New Zealand Biography, Vol. Four, 1921-1940* (Auckland, 1998), pp. 479-480, p. 479.

<sup>36</sup> Anderson, 'Henry Devenish Skinner', p. 479.

using data garnered from reports written by colonial officials, soldiers, and missionaries. W. H. R. Rivers, whose training in psychology underpinned his approach to anthropology, accompanied Haddon on the Torres expedition.<sup>37</sup> Like other anthropologists of his generation who rejected social evolutionary theory, Rivers embraced diffusionism as a model for cultural development. However, in this period of rapid shifts in anthropological paradigms, the idea that change occurred exclusively through the transmission of ideas from one people to another was soon to be replaced by the tenets of functionalism and structuralism, models developed by Rivers' students Malinowski and Radcliffe Brown.<sup>38</sup>

The opportunities for Skinner at Cambridge extended beyond his enrolment in the Diploma of Anthropology and registration for a BA (Research). Haddon's generosity to his students allowed the small group of young men to spend a great deal of time with their teacher, both in the classroom and informally and they were also introduced to Haddon's network of prominent anthropologists, which included W. H. R. Rivers and James George Frazer. Noting Skinner's interest in museum collections, Haddon involved him in the University Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology's relocation to new premises. Skinner helped unpack and arrange artefacts, gaining experience in cataloguing and classifying objects, including the museum's extensive collection of Moriori artefacts.<sup>39</sup>

Upon his return to New Zealand, Skinner unsuccessfully lobbied the University of New Zealand to include anthropology in its syllabus, arguing that future colonial administrators needed to understand Polynesian cultures.<sup>40</sup> His argument reflected the reliance by early twentieth century anthropologists upon colonial administrations for the funding and support necessary to conduct fieldwork and training programmes.<sup>41</sup> When

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<sup>37</sup> Thomas Hylland Eriksen and Finn Sivert Nielsen, *A History of Anthropology* (London, 2001), pp. 17, 24, 26.

<sup>38</sup> Alan Barnard, *History and Theory in Anthropology* (Cambridge, 2000), pp. 47, 53, 59.

<sup>39</sup> Peter Gathercole, 'Introduction', in *Comparatively Speaking. Studies in Pacific Material Culture 1921-1972* by H. D. Skinner (Dunedin, 1974), pp. 11-18, 12-13.

<sup>40</sup> Gathercole, p. 12.

<sup>41</sup> Talal Asad, 'Introduction' in *Anthropology and the Colonial Encounter*, edited by Talal Asad (London, 1973), pp. 9-19, p. 17; Henrika Kuklick, *The Savage Within. The Social History of British Anthropology, 1885-1945* (Cambridge, 1991), pp. 182, 240.

the University of New Zealand denied Skinner the opportunity to take an active role in teaching anthropological theory to future administrators, he looked to museums for employment instead.<sup>42</sup> At this time, New Zealand museums provided the only professional forum for study of Polynesian cultures. However, when Skinner secured an assistant curatorship at the university museum at Otago, he also gained the opportunity to teach the first course in ethnology offered at one of the University of New Zealand's colleges. This dual role enabled Skinner to amass a notable collection of artefacts from Pacific cultures for the museum, and influence a new generation of New Zealand ethnologists, anthropologists, and archaeologists.<sup>43</sup>

H. D. Skinner's determination to document Polynesian cultures before they changed in response to modernity reflected both his formative years as a member of the Polynesian Society and his training as an anthropologist. In 1892, Percy Smith had charged the Society's amateur Pakeha ethnologists with the salvage of Maori oral traditions and cultural practices before they were lost in changes wrought by colonisation. Anthropologists also felt compelled to collect data on indigenous peoples before their ways of life altered significantly in response to sustained contact with European cultures. Both groups assumed that if the peoples they studied did not actually die out, their cultures would at least receive irrevocable damage in the colonisation process.<sup>44</sup> In making this assumption, each rendered the subjects of their scrutiny passive in the face of profound cultural change, seeing it as something that was done to them rather than a process of cross-cultural interaction and adaptation. Skinner saw his task as an anthropologist to record and collect data on 'traditional' Polynesian cultures before the evidence was lost forever, for the benefit of future generations of European academics.<sup>45</sup>

Although Skinner retained the same motive for his work as Percy Smith, Elsdon Best and other older members of the Society, his training at Cambridge reinforced differences in his approach. Despite their desire for approval from professional British anthropologists,

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<sup>42</sup> Gathercole, p. 14.

<sup>43</sup> Freeman, p. 16.

<sup>44</sup> Stocking, *Victorian Anthropology*, p. 273.

<sup>45</sup> Gathercole, pp. 13-14.

Smith and Best centred their analyses of Maori culture on the examination of oral traditions, a method that had fallen out of favour in Britain.<sup>46</sup> Even prior to his time at Cambridge, Skinner had been sceptical of the value in treating oral traditions as the primary source of Polynesian pre-contact history. Comparative cultural analysis underpinned his doctoral thesis, *The Morioris of Chatham Islands*, and provided the basis of his argument for the Polynesian origins of the Moriori people.<sup>47</sup> Smith and Best responded to Skinner's rejection of oral tradition as a means of determining origins by making it clear that they saw him as an armchair anthropologist who needed more experience in the field to temper his enthusiasm for theory.<sup>48</sup>

H. D. Skinner's interest in Moriori culture began before Percy Smith announced the discovery of the documents he published as *The Lore of the Whare-wananga*. Interest among Pakeha New Zealanders in Smith and Best's theories of Moriori origins motivated Skinner to undertake a detailed study of Moriori history and material culture, which was at first interrupted by his enlistment in the army but later facilitated by the opportunity to study collections of Moriori artefacts in Britain.<sup>49</sup> When he returned to New Zealand in 1919, Skinner undertook a long-deferred field trip to the Chathams. His determination to reach the islands saw him stow away onboard the *Ngahere* when the Marine department forbade the passage of non-crew members on the voyage for which he had booked a berth. Reliant on the *Ngahere* for his return passage, Skinner's time in the field was shorter than he had hoped, but he was able to interview remaining Moriori, Pakeha Chatham Islanders, as well as view the *kopi* tree carvings and examine old settlement sites. In return, the Chatham Islanders quizzed Skinner on his war experiences.<sup>50</sup>

### ***The Morioris of Chatham Islands***

Skinner began the introduction to his thesis by outlining the theory that Moriori were descended from the first wave of migration to New Zealand. He argued that if this theory

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<sup>46</sup> Gibbons, 'Non-Fiction', p. 60.

<sup>47</sup> Freeman, p. 23; Gathercole, p. 15.

<sup>48</sup> Gathercole, p. 15.

<sup>49</sup> Freeman, p. 15.

<sup>50</sup> Skinner, *Moriori of Chatham Islands*, p. 4.

were true, a study of Moriori culture would be essential to understanding New Zealand's cultural history as a whole. However, there were "several facts which seemed to indicate that the problem of Maori and Moriori origins was not so simple as the current explanation assumed."<sup>51</sup> Namely, Moriori culture "was not in any way more primitive than that of the Maoris", and their craniology was Polynesian.<sup>52</sup> Although he intended his examination of the evidence to focus largely on material culture, Skinner observed that knowledge of daily life was essential to analysis of artefacts, and discussion of origins required assessment of "racial characteristics" and oral traditions.<sup>53</sup> For this he drew heavily upon observations recorded by European explorers and settlers, and in particular, the work of Alexander Shand.

*The Morioris of Chatham Islands* began with an assessment of two distinct histories, which Skinner referred to as the "Moriori version" and the "Maori version"<sup>54</sup>. Shand was the source of the Moriori version, while the other version drew on *The Lore of the Whare-wananga*. Skinner stated that the Maori version "owes its credence at the present time to the fact that it has been accepted by two of the foremost of Maori scholars – Mr. Percy Smith and Mr. Elsdon Best."<sup>55</sup> He added: "It is with extreme reluctance and regret that I find myself compelled to differ in my estimate of the Maori version from friends to whom I owe much."<sup>56</sup> After expressing this sentiment, Skinner launched into an assessment of flaws in the account derived from Hoani Te Whatahoro's documents. He argued that even if the Maruiwi had originated from Melanesia rather than a nameless land south-west of New Zealand, it was unlikely that a fishing expedition would include women in its numbers or have enough food to last for a journey of a thousand miles. Given the Maruiwi's haplessness, Skinner considered it was also unlikely that their boats would last the distance.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> Skinner, *Moriori of Chatham Islands*, p. 3.

<sup>52</sup> Skinner, *Moriori of Chatham Islands*, p. 3.

<sup>53</sup> Skinner, *Moriori of Chatham Islands*, p. 5.

<sup>54</sup> Skinner, *Morioris of Chatham Islands*, p. 17.

<sup>55</sup> Skinner, *Morioris of Chatham Islands*, p. 17.

<sup>56</sup> Skinner, *Morioris of Chatham Islands*, p. 17.

<sup>57</sup> Skinner, *Morioris of Chatham Islands*, p. 17

Perceiving physical traits as primary evidence of origins, Skinner highlighted discrepancies between the Maruiwi's physical appearance and Moriori characteristics in greatest depth. He pointed out that a "comparison of physical characteristics shows that the mythical Maruiwi are the direct antithesis of the Moriori".<sup>58</sup> Whereas the Maruiwi were tall, wiry, with straight hair and flat noses, Moriori tended to be short, muscular, with curly hair and large noses. Skinner observed both Alexander Shand and Elsdon Best linked the occasional incidence of frizzy hair in the Moriori population to a similar occurrence among Tuhoe, whom Best believed to be descended from Maruiwi. Yet the Maruiwi were described as having straight, lank hair. Although Skinner paid greater attention to discrepancies in the description, both he and Best believed physical appearance presented weighty evidence in determining a people's origins, reflecting their disciplines' obsession with differences between human populations, in that period.<sup>59</sup>

After considering the flaws in the Maori version, Skinner assessed Alexander Shand's abilities as a linguist and his relationship with Chatham Islands Maori and Moriori, finding that the degree of trust his informants placed in him was unrivalled by other Europeans. He argued that though Te Whatahoro's account stated Moriori referred to themselves as Mouriuri, it was most unlikely Shand's informants lied to him – or other Pakeha scholars – on this matter. Te Whatahoro's informants claimed that Wharekauri and not Rekohu was the name originally bestowed on the island group, and Te Ati Awa Maori reinstated the name Wharekauri when they arrived. Yet, according to local Maori, they had coined the name in the nineteenth century. Skinner also observed that Chatham Islands Maori had no knowledge of Te Whatahoro's traditions before their publication, despite their alleged existence among West Coast Maori for centuries.<sup>60</sup>

In summing up his analysis of the two versions of Moriori history, Skinner made it clear that he considered the information in Te Whatahoro's documents to be unreliable. While he took care to criticise Te Whatahoro's informants rather than Percy Smith's

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<sup>58</sup> Skinner, *Morioris of Chatham Islands*, p. 18.

<sup>59</sup> Nancy Leys Stepan, 'Race, Gender, Science and Citizenship', in *Cultures of Empire. Colonizers in Britain and the Empire in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries*, edited by Catherine Hall (Manchester, 2000), pp. 61-86, p. 65.

<sup>60</sup> Skinner, *Morioris of Chatham Islands*, pp. 20-21.

endorsement and use of their traditions, he also condemned the influence of erroneous ideas about Moriori that stemmed from publication of *The Lore of the Whare-wananga*.

It is necessary to speak plainly in this matter because the Maruiwi myth has taken firm hold on Maori history, and appears as the background of what may otherwise be regarded as definitive histories of districts which comprise fully half of the North Island. Not only has it been adopted in New Zealand, but it has influenced the work of well-known writers overseas. Further, the demonstration that one part of “The Lore of the Whare-Wananga” is unreliable must affect our judgment as to the reliability of the rest of that work.<sup>61</sup>

Skinner’s criticism of *The Lore of the Whare-wananga* comprised the strongest challenge of a Polynesian Society member to what M. P. K. Sorrenson called the “Smith orthodoxy” during Percy Smith’s lifetime.<sup>62</sup>

Although *The Morioris of Chatham Islands* began with H. D. Skinner’s critique of Hoani Te Whatahoro’s version of Moriori history, most of its general analysis of Moriori culture focused on observations derived from other sources. Skinner included accounts from British explorers and settlers in his history of early European interactions with Moriori, as well as extracts from Alexander Shand on the 1835 invasion.<sup>63</sup> He also drew heavily upon Shand’s work for information on Moriori social life and social structure, and utilised Archdeacon Herbert Williams’ comparative analysis of Moriori language to conclude that Moriori vocabulary was closest to Ngai Tahu dialects.<sup>64</sup> When he compared the relative value of the various primary sources in his literature review, Skinner contended that Shand’s efforts surpassed other works. “When the difficulties besetting the collection of material are considered, its accuracy, its detail, and its amount entitle Shand to a high place among field-workers in ethnology of the Pacific.”<sup>65</sup>

However, in praising Shand, Skinner failed to consider Hirawanu Tapu’s efforts to collect that material. Tapu’s contribution was crucial to the accuracy, detail, and quantity of Moriori oral traditions reproduced in *The Moriori People of the Chatham Islands*, not only through his interviews with Moriori elders but also through his collaboration with

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<sup>61</sup> Skinner, *Morioris of Chatham Islands*, p. 21.

<sup>62</sup> Sorrenson, *Manifest Duty*, p. 65.

<sup>63</sup> Skinner, *Morioris of Chatham Islands*, pp. 22-33.

<sup>64</sup> Skinner, *Morioris of Chatham Islands*, pp. 44-64, 43.

<sup>65</sup> Skinner, *Morioris of Chatham Islands*, p. 135.

Shand in their translation. It may be that ethnocentricity blinded Skinner to the importance of Tapu's role in ensuring the qualities of the work he attributed solely to Shand, through an unconscious assumption that fieldwork was an exclusively European endeavour.

In his own analysis of Moriori material culture, Skinner devised an entirely new system of classification for artefacts. His method was based on an assumption that high degree of resemblance between artefacts from different cultures indicated a high probability that those cultures shared the same origin. Its adoption by other researchers meant that, for the first time, studies in material culture shared a common method of classification.<sup>66</sup> Skinner's comparative analysis of Moriori artefacts found that they bore greatest resemblance to those of southern mainland iwi.

The evidence derived from Moriori material culture is thus decisively in favour of the New Zealand origin of that people. It will be seen, further, that their relationship was closest with what I have elsewhere called the southern culture of New Zealand. We do not know from what district the Moriori ancestors migrated to the Chathams, but it must have been a district in which this southern culture existed.<sup>67</sup>

In Skinner's opinion, analysis of material cultural produced findings that were far more robust than analysis of oral traditions alone. And as for the "Maori traditions" of Moriori history: "if there is a kernel of truth behind them it is not at present apparent. The traditions relating to the 'Maruiwi' that are associated with these stories of discovery have been shown to be worthless."<sup>68</sup>

After a second field trip to the Chatham Islands in 1924, H. D. Skinner published a collection of essays on Moriori culture that included an article by William Baucke, a long-time resident of Chatham Island.<sup>69</sup> Baucke's knowledge of Moriori came to Skinner's attention after he read a series of articles by Baucke printed in the *New Zealand*

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<sup>66</sup> Freeman, pp. 24-25.

<sup>67</sup> Skinner, *Morioris of Chatham Islands*, p. 132.

<sup>68</sup> Skinner, *Morioris of Chatham Islands*, p. 129.

<sup>69</sup> Skinner and Baucke, *The Morioris*. Baucke's contribution: 'The Life and Customs of the Moriori', pp. 357-84.

*Herald* in 1923.<sup>70</sup> Skinner was “struck by the vividness of some of the sketches, and wrote to the author urging him to place on record the whole of his memories of Moriori life and culture.”<sup>71</sup> He rated the manuscript that Baucke produced after being given funding from the Bernice P. Bishop Museum as second only to Shand’s *The Moriori People of the Chatham Islands* as a source. However, Skinner also had some doubts about Baucke’s recollections.

[I]t may be pointed out that Baucke’s account of Moriori physical anthropology is in conflict with all other accounts. Further, his estimate of Moriori intelligence while true, doubtless, of the remnant that survived after the ‘fifties, is certainly contradicted by the workmanship illustrated here and in the Memoir previously published.<sup>72</sup>

Skinner recommended that his readers take some of Baucke’s observations on Moriori with a grain of salt, and reproduced the manuscript in full so they could make up their own minds on its relative value.<sup>73</sup>

William Baucke was born on Chatham Island in 1848 to missionary parents. While he spent much of his life on the island, he also worked as a licensed Maori interpreter in the King Country for many years, where he spoke out against the marginalisation of Maori within New Zealand society. In addition to his memoirs of Moriori culture, he wrote a series of articles on Maori social life and customs for the *New Zealand Herald*.<sup>74</sup> Baucke structured his recollections of Moriori society into topics generally found in ethnographical texts of the time, including information on social customs and food gathering and preparation.<sup>75</sup> His observations on these subjects appear relatively balanced, with no apparent bias beyond his ethnocentrism. However, when comparing Moriori and Maori cultures Baucke made no effort to hide his contempt for Moriori, in which he was influenced by his friendships with Chatham Islands Maori.<sup>76</sup> He also mistrusted

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<sup>70</sup> William Baucke, ‘An Extinct Race, Morioris of the Chathams’, *New Zealand Herald: Supplement to the New Zealand Herald*, 8 July 1922, 15 July 1922, 22 July 1922, 5 August 1922, 12 August 1922, 19 August 1922, 26 August 1922, 2 September 1922, 9 September 1922, 23 September 1922, 14 October 1922, p. 1.

<sup>71</sup> Skinner and Baucke, *The Morioris*, p. 355.

<sup>72</sup> Skinner and Baucke, *The Morioris*, p. 356.

<sup>73</sup> Skinner and Baucke, *The Morioris*, p. 355.

<sup>74</sup> Sheila Natusch, ‘Johann Friedrich Wilhelm Baucke, 1848-1931’, in *The Dictionary of New Zealand Biography, Vol. Three, 1901-1920* (Auckland, 1996), p. 37.

<sup>75</sup> Baucke, ‘The Life and Customs of the Moriori’, pp. 359-67.

<sup>76</sup> For instance, Baucke referred to pre-contact Moriori as “creatures” placed between humans and animals, while post-contact Moriori were “degenerates”: Baucke, ‘The Life and Customs of the Moriori’, p. 372.

Hirawanu Tapu, whom he accused of asking leading questions, and believed Shand was a fool to trust him.<sup>77</sup> In Baucke's opinion, his own work was far more reliable than Shand's accounts of Moriori society.<sup>78</sup> Skinner was forewarned of Baucke's prejudice by the first of Baucke's articles for the *New Zealand Herald*, which declared that Shand's efforts had been hampered by the "stone-dull Moriori intellect" which had to be "power-drilled into by tireless question and cross-question."<sup>79</sup> In Baucke's favour, from Skinner's perspective, was his view that Moriori were Polynesian and in no way associated with the Maruiwi.<sup>80</sup>

### Dissent within the Society

Fortunately for Skinner, other critics of the theory that Moriori were the descendents of Maruiwi produced more robust evidence in defence of their arguments. Almost all Polynesian Society members who disagreed with Percy Smith and Elsdon Best's Moriori theories kept their opinions private until after both men's deaths, doing so out of respect for Smith and Best's work as collectors. After Best's death in 1932, Herbert Williams became the second member of the Society to publish criticism of the Maruiwi theory. Unlike Skinner, whose texts were published by the Bernice P. Bishop Museum, Williams had his critique printed in the *Journal of the Polynesian Society*.<sup>81</sup> When the article was published just before his death in 1937, Williams was president of the Polynesian Society. His revision of his grandfather William Williams' Maori-to-English dictionary had established *A dictionary of the Maori language* as the paramount record of any Polynesian language, and confirmed his reputation as a major Maori linguist of the period.<sup>82</sup> Williams held a position of strength from which to criticise Percy Smith and Elsdon Best's theories of Moriori origins.

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<sup>77</sup> Baucke, 'The Life and Customs of the Moriori', p. 384.

<sup>78</sup> Baucke, 'The Life and Customs of the Moriori', p. 357.

<sup>79</sup> William Baucke, 'An Extinct Race. Morioris of the Chathams', *Supplement to the New Zealand Herald*, 8 July 1922, p. 1.

<sup>80</sup> Baucke, 'An Extinct Race', p. 1.

<sup>81</sup> Sorrenson, *Manifest Duty*, pp. 71, 75-76; H. W. Williams, 'The Maruiwi Myth', *JPS*, 46, 3 (1937), pp. 105-22.

<sup>82</sup> Bruce Biggs, 'Herbert William Williams, 1860-1937', in *The Dictionary of New Zealand Biography, Vol. Three, 1901-1920* (Auckland, 1996), pp. 570-571, p. 571; Herbert W. Williams, *A dictionary of the Maori language* (Wellington, 1917).

In his article, Williams argued that Smith and Best had been unwise to rely on Hoani Te Whatahoro's documents as a record of New Zealand's early history. He believed that oral traditions were quite separate to European ideas of history, and was not comfortable with Smith and Best's use of traditions as historical evidence. Williams ascribed the fallacies within the material to Moihi Te Matorohanga rather than Te Whatahoro, whom he saw as being rather credulous.<sup>83</sup> He also implied that Smith and Best manipulated the oral traditions, pointing out that few people had seen the original documents in order to be able to judge the contents for themselves.<sup>84</sup> In 'Maori and Maruiwi' Best claimed to quote Te Matorohanga as saying: "It is known that all of us are descended from Maruiwi – from those women taken by our Maori ancestors."<sup>85</sup> Yet Williams could not find the original Maori text in *The Lore of the Whare-wananga*.<sup>86</sup> Smith's deduction that Moriori were descendants of part-Melanesian settlers was based on Te Matorohanga's description of the 'Tangata-whenua' fleeing the mainland.<sup>87</sup> However, once again Williams could not find the original Maori text, and as he observed: "nor is it anywhere ever said that they arrived there."<sup>88</sup> Herbert Williams' criticism of Smith and Best's Moriori theories and the authenticity of *The Lore of the Whare-wananga* added a second voice to H. D. Skinner's refutation.

Sir Peter Buck became the third prominent member of the Polynesian Society to criticise Percy Smith and Elsdon Best's Moriori theories publicly. Although Buck originally trained as a doctor and practised medicine for many years, in the 1920s he became increasingly active in anthropological studies. During his service with the New Zealand Pioneer Battalion during World War One he had met with a number of British anthropologists, from whom he borrowed instruments to document the physical characteristics of men in the battalion. After his return to New Zealand, Buck accompanied Elsdon Best on field trips to collect oral traditions and waiata, and began writing for the *Journal of the Polynesian Society*. In the 1920s he also gave a number of

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<sup>83</sup> Williams, p. 108.

<sup>84</sup> Williams, p. 109.

<sup>85</sup> Best, 'Maori and Maruiwi', p. 436.

<sup>86</sup> Williams, p. 114.

<sup>87</sup> Smith, *Vol. II*, p. 77.

<sup>88</sup> Williams, p. 116.

public lectures, including ‘The Coming of the Maori’, which he later expanded into a book by the same title in 1949.<sup>89</sup> *The Coming of the Maori* presented Buck’s own theories of early New Zealand history, underpinned by his engagement with physical anthropology.<sup>90</sup>

Before setting out his own theory of the origins of New Zealand’s first inhabitants, Buck dealt with Percy Smith and Elsdon Best’s theories of the settlers’ identity. He began with a dissection of *The Lore of the Whare-wananga*’s description of the ‘Tangata-whenua’, which he argued was suspiciously detailed given that the tradition was allegedly hundreds of years old. Buck also observed that their straight, lank hair did not accord with the characteristic woolly hair in Melanesian populations. Neither did their Polynesian names suggest Melanesian origins.<sup>91</sup> Overall, Buck found the account “exasperating in its copious details which make one wonder how anyone in New Zealand could possibly know more about the people on a distant island than the people themselves.”<sup>92</sup> He also cast doubt on the reliability of some oral traditions collected by Hirawanu Tapu and Alexander Shand, arguing that the earliest narratives were unlikely to have survived in such length for such a long period.<sup>93</sup>

Although he did reject the theory that New Zealand’s first settlers migrated from Melanesia, Buck based his theories of settlement upon the migration sequences contained in *The Lore of the Whare-wananga*. Modern Maori were descended from “the moa-hunters and the early *tangata whenua* who came with Maruiwi, the two crews under Toi and Whatonga, and the settlers from the Fleet of 1350.”<sup>94</sup> In Buck’s opinion the moa hunters and the early *tangata whenua* came from “some unidentified island” but “owing to the teaching of one of the Maori houses of learning, they were assumed to be of Melanesian origin.”<sup>95</sup> He argued that comparisons by Europeans between Moriori and

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<sup>89</sup> M. P. K. Sorrenson, ‘Peter Henry Buck, 1877?-1951’, in *The Dictionary of New Zealand Biography, Vol. Three, 1901-1920* (Auckland, 1996), pp. 72-74, p. 73.

<sup>90</sup> Buck, *The Coming of the Maori*.

<sup>91</sup> Buck, p. 11.

<sup>92</sup> Buck, p. 16.

<sup>93</sup> Buck, p. 21.

<sup>94</sup> Buck, p. 65.

<sup>95</sup> Buck, p. 65.

Melanesian physical features were “accepted as confirmation of the theory that New Zealand was first settled by people of Melanesian stock.”<sup>96</sup> Buck contended that only physical anthropologists had the necessary training to draw conclusions on the origins of a people.<sup>97</sup> His own analysis of the available evidence, taken from studies of Moriori craniology, indicated that New Zealand’s first settlers were from Tahiti. These migrants grew into a large population that spread to the South Island before the moa’s extinction, and probably before the arrival of the Great Fleet in 1350. Therefore, neither the first migrants nor the Moriori were of Melanesian origin.<sup>98</sup>

Sir Peter Buck’s reputation as a scholar, and his lifelong familiarity with Maori oral traditions, added weight to the public criticism of Percy Smith and Elsdon Best’s Moriori theories by Herbert Williams and H. D. Skinner. Sir Apirana Ngata also expressed doubts, but refrained from voicing them publicly out of respect for the two ethnologists.<sup>99</sup> Although the idea of a Melanesian settlement of New Zealand and its conquest by Maori gained momentum through the work of two of the Polynesian Society’s most prominent members, its earliest refutations also came from Society members. Endorsement of Smith and Best’s theories came from their supporters within the Society, such as journal editor Johannes Andersen, but the Society’s role in their promulgation was rendered complex by dissent from other key members.<sup>100</sup> Delay in public criticism by Herbert Williams and Sir Peter Buck, which left H. D. Skinner as a lone voice for some years, may have contributed to the theories’ entrenchment in the school curriculum. Yet, given the speed with which the idea that primitive first settlers were conquered by the culturally superior Maori and forced to flee to the Chathams was absorbed into narratives of the New Zealand’s past, it appeared that the efforts of Skinner, Williams, and Buck alone were not sufficient to stop its progress.

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<sup>96</sup> Buck, p. 65.

<sup>97</sup> Buck, p. 65.

<sup>98</sup> Buck, p. 69-70.

<sup>99</sup> Sorrenson, *Manifest Duty*, p. 75.

<sup>100</sup> Sorrenson, *Manifest Duty*, p. 66.

## Explaining the Past

In order to understand why criticism of Percy Smith and Elsdon Best's Moriori theories failed to dampen public enthusiasm for their ideas, it is necessary to explore possible explanations for the theories' popularity. Kerry Howe has advanced three arguments to explain the story's enthusiastic reception among Pakeha. Firstly, the idea that two distinct cultures settled in New Zealand explained the discovery of what appeared to be two forms of artefacts found in archaeological sites. Excavations of some moa processing sites had revealed tools that appeared distinctly more primitive than those found in other digs. *The Lore of the Whare-wananga's* Great Fleet narrative provided a fully formed answer to the mystery of two apparent levels of material culture in its tale of a primitive population supplanted by a technologically advanced people. Smith and Best's development of this story was grounded in an assumption championed by diffusionists, that change could only occur as a result of cross-cultural interaction and not through internal processes. Therefore, rather than assume that different levels of sophistication in artefacts demonstrated evolving technological expertise, these ethnologists framed difference as an indication of two separate peoples. According to Smith and Best, the first belonged to a primitive hunter-gatherer culture, while the second people possessed a superior agrarian culture. This tale of two cultures reflected contemporary understandings of ancient European history, which Smith and Best then imposed on a New Zealand landscape.<sup>101</sup>

Howe's second explanation for the theories' popularity centres on Pakeha unease over the effects of British colonisation on Maori at the time Smith and Best published their texts. He argues that a narrative construing Maori as conquerors and colonisers justified the country's colonisation by Britain for white settlers who either directly or indirectly benefited from that process.<sup>102</sup> Even though it is doubtful that Smith and Best deliberately intended to provide comfort to colonisers, their versions of early New Zealand history could be read as a blueprint for Herbert Spencer's survival-of-the-fittest doctrine.<sup>103</sup> A primitive people colonise New Zealand only to be usurped by culturally superior

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<sup>101</sup> Howe, *Origins*, pp. 164-66.

<sup>102</sup> Howe, *Origins*, pp. 166-67.

<sup>103</sup> Byrnes, 'Savages and Scholars', p. 61.

migrants who, centuries later, witness their own conquest by an advanced culture: this scenario provided justification and absolution for those engaged in a contemporary colonisation.<sup>104</sup>

Finally, Howe suggests that Percy Smith's Great Fleet migration sequence resonated with Pakeha who had themselves crossed a vast expanse of ocean to settle New Zealand's shores, and were searching for a new identity in their new land. A tale of early discovery and conquest through heroic endeavours provided an exotic background to scripts of Pakeha settlement.<sup>105</sup> It allowed Pakeha New Zealanders to connect with a sense of history in a country in which tangible evidence of the past was invisible to a European gaze. There were no castles or ancient market towns in New Zealand to provide an instant, visible sense of historical continuity for Europeans. Instead, the story of brave Polynesian explorers, and their shiftless foes, peopled the past.

In measuring the strength of each argument, Howe appears to favour the idea that Smith and Best's migration stories provided European colonists with a justification for their colonisation of Maori. It explained the instant popularity of Smith and Best's ideas about New Zealand's early history and its continued transmission through school lessons and books. He questions the degree of interest among most Pakeha for explanations of archaeological mysteries, and argues that the development of Pakeha national identity in the early twentieth century centred more on sport and war than stories of exploration. However, as Howe suggests, the answer to the popularity of Smith and Best's ideas was that they met the needs of the time, which were somewhat entangled rather than straightforward. While Smith and Best's ideas provided a justification of European colonisation for those conscious of its effects on Maori, they also explained an archaeological puzzle, and strengthened an emergent colonial national identity.<sup>106</sup>

The failure of efforts by H. D. Skinner, Herbert Williams, and Sir Peter Buck to pour cold water over public enthusiasm for Percy Smith and Elsdon Best's versions of early New

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<sup>104</sup> Howe, *Origins*, p. 167.

<sup>105</sup> Howe, *Origins*, p. 167.

<sup>106</sup> Howe, *Origins*, pp. 164, 166, 171.

Zealand history indicated that their stories served the interests of Pakeha in a way that made them irresistible. Skinner, Williams, and Buck did present their arguments in academic texts that fell outside the reading material likely to be favoured by most New Zealanders, but then so did Smith and Best. It seems that the two ethnologists published their work at a time when its contents were most likely to be embraced by Pakeha, while public appreciation for Skinner's findings – in particular – was delayed by half a century because they failed to meet the needs of the time. Smith and Best's influence was more pervasive than that of dissenting Society members because stories of the 'Tangata-whenua' and the Maruiwi meshed with the Zeitgeist of early twentieth century Pakeha society.

## 4. Textbook History

### Introduction

During the first half of the twentieth century, stories of mainland Moriori and their conquest by Maori often featured in history texts written for schoolchildren and in general histories of New Zealand. Chapter Four traces the transmission of Percy Smith and Elsdon Best's ideas about Moriori history and culture through classroom texts. It begins by sketching the development of a local children's literature from the late nineteenth century, setting tales of mainland Moriori within a broader context of children's stories of New Zealand. It examines ways in which Moriori history was portrayed prior to the 1950s through examples in the *School Journal*, schoolbooks such as A. W. Reed's *The Coming of the Maori to Ao-tea-roa*, and in general histories. The content of stories of New Zealand's earliest settlement altered in the 1960s, and this chapter also explores possible explanations for the disappearance of mainland Moriori from school texts at this time. In particular, it assesses Roger Duff's role in contributing to a new perspective on New Zealand's earliest human past. It concludes with an outline of further challenges to the mainland Moriori orthodoxy made by Pakeha and Maori academics in the 1970s.

### A New Literature

Until the 1880s, most schoolbooks used in New Zealand classrooms were imported from Britain. Written for the working class pupils of British council schools, their contents emphasised the importance of knowing one's place in society, through stories set in surroundings familiar to their British audience. From the mid-1880s, New Zealand publisher Whitcombe and Tombs produced schoolbooks containing stories that placed less emphasis on the merits of the British class system, but were still usually set in Britain.<sup>1</sup> Rare stories with New Zealand themes positioned their Maori characters as foreigners in an exotic landscape.<sup>2</sup> However, by the beginning of the twentieth century, with British-born New Zealanders now a demographic minority,

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<sup>1</sup> Hugh Price, 'Reading Books and Reading in New Zealand Schools 1877-1900', in *Reinterpreting the Educational Past. Essays in the History of New Zealand Education*, edited by Roger Openshaw and David McKenzie (Wellington, 1987), pp. 181-192, pp. 183-83.

<sup>2</sup> Patrick Evans, *The Penguin History of New Zealand Literature* (Auckland, 1990), p. 23.

Pakeha writers saw greater need for a children's literature that reflected local concerns.<sup>3</sup>

This followed efforts by nineteenth century Pakeha intellectuals to forge a new cultural identity in a country that was twelve thousand miles from home. The cultural symbols of Europe served as a reminder of the distance between Britain and the South Pacific, but the adaptation of those symbols to a local context may have lessened the sense of alienation for colonial intellectuals. Early attempts to create new cultural markers centred on New Zealand's landscape and its first inhabitants. Aspects of Maori culture provided instant ingredients for Pakeha engaged in binding their literary or artistic efforts to the environment in which they were produced. Oral traditions collected by ethnologists like Percy Smith and Elsdon Best, and historian James Cowan, provided the bones on which Pakeha writers could flesh out their stories of New Zealand.<sup>4</sup>

Maori oral traditions were also a source of inspiration for children's stories. In the emerging field of children's literature at the turn of the century in Britain, stories for younger children were based on European folklore, and Pakeha writers adapted the genre to a New Zealand context. In 1891, Edward Tregear wrote the first collection of stories for children to be published in New Zealand, *Fairy Tales and Folk-lore of New Zealand and the South Seas*. Polynesian Society stalwart Johannes Andersen followed this with his own collection for children, *Maori Fairy Tales*, in 1908.<sup>5</sup> After the publication of *The Lore of the Whare-wananga*, romanticised stories of waka migrations became staple fare in local children's literature, including early issues of the *School Journal*.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Betty Gilderdale, 'Children's Literature' in *The Oxford History of New Zealand Literature in English*, edited by Terry Sturm, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Auckland, 1998), pp. 525-574, p. 529.

<sup>4</sup> Jock Phillips, 'Musings in Maoriland – or was there a Bulletin school in New Zealand', *Historical Studies*, 20, 81 (1983), pp. 520-35, pp. 526-33. Examples of late nineteenth century New Zealand identity literature include: Arthur Adams, *Maoriland and Other Verses* (Sydney, 1899); Thomas Bracken, *Musings in Maoriland* (Dunedin, Wellington, 1890); Jessie Mackay, *The Spirit of the Rangatira and Other Ballads* (Melbourne, 1889); William Pember Reeves, *The Long White Cloud: Ao tea roa* (London, 1898).

<sup>5</sup> Gilderdale, p. 529; Edward Tregear, *Fairy Tales and Folk-lore of New Zealand and the South Seas* (Wellington, 1891); Johannes Andersen, *Maori Fairy Tales* (Christchurch, 1908).

<sup>6</sup> Angela Wanhalla, 'Maori Women in Waka Traditions', in *Shifting Centres. Women and Migration in New Zealand History*, edited by Lyndon Fraser and Katie Pickles (Dunedin, 2002), pp. 15-28, pp. 17, 19.

## **The *School Journal***

The Education Department developed the *School Journal* as primary school readers for history and geography lessons, in response to the costs and delays involved in importing schoolbooks to New Zealand.<sup>7</sup> Divided into three parts for junior, middle, and senior classes, its collections of stories and articles became integral classroom resources, ensuring a wide readership.<sup>8</sup> Polynesian exploration and migration to New Zealand featured as one of the earliest topics for home-grown history lessons, with a handful of issues containing stories based on Percy Smith and Elsdon Best's theories of Moriori origins and culture.<sup>9</sup> These articles appear to be the first examples of mainland Moriori stories in children's books, providing a bridge between Smith and Best's work and the school curriculum.

The first story based on *The Lore of the Whare-wananga* narratives was published in the *School Journal* in February 1916. A "very old, wise chief" served as the narrator for 'The Coming of the Maoris', which described the discovery of New Zealand by Kupe and Toi for junior pupils.<sup>10</sup>

Yet, after a time – how long ago I cannot say – there were men, and children, and houses, and fires in Aotearoa. Three boats were blown there from another island, carrying men who were not Maoris, but lazy, stupid people, with flat noses and very dark skins. These people stayed in New Zealand, and spread from place to place, hunting the moa, and eating the fish and the fern-root.<sup>11</sup>

Maori were the heroes in this tale of exploration, their skills and enterprise set in contrast to those of the 'natives' whom they discovered. However, this story made no link between these first settlers and Moriori.

The second story to appear in the *School Journal*, 'How the Maoris Came to New Zealand. Toi and Whatonga', made an explicit link: "their descendants, the people who afterwards settled the Chatham Isles, are known as the Moriori."<sup>12</sup> Moriori claimants at a 1994 Waitangi Tribunal hearing would later use this story as evidence

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<sup>7</sup> Betty Gilderdale, *A Sea Change. 145 years of New Zealand junior fiction* (Auckland, 1982), p. 237.

<sup>8</sup> Gilderdale, 'Children's Literature', p. 537; Colin McGeorge, 'Schools and Socialisation in New Zealand 1890-1914', University of Canterbury MA thesis (Christchurch, 1985), p. 321.

<sup>9</sup> See: 'The Coming of the Maoris', *School Journal*, Part 1 (February 1916), pp. 10-16; 'How the Maoris Came to New Zealand. Toi and Whatonga', *School Journal*, Part 3 (March 1916), pp. 41-46; 'The Passing of the Mouriri', *School Journal*, Part 3 (July 1916), pp. 184-91.

<sup>10</sup> 'The Coming of the Maoris', p. 11.

<sup>11</sup> 'The Coming of the Maoris', p. 13.

<sup>12</sup> 'How the Maoris Came to New Zealand', p. 42.

of group defamation of Moriori by the Crown through the education system.<sup>13</sup> The text certainly described these alleged Moriori ancestors in disparaging terms.

They are described in Maori tradition as a people of inferior culture, and as not so advanced as the Maori in the various arts. They were slight in build, and had dark skins, upstanding or bushy hair, flat noses, and upturned nostrils. They had a habit of looking sideways out of the corners of their eyes, and were an indolent and chilly folk, fond of hugging the fireside.<sup>14</sup>

Yet, this description blends details from *The Lore of the Whare-wananga* with Elsdon Best's article, including plagiarism of Best's phrase, "an indolent and chilly folk".<sup>15</sup> At one point, the anonymous author also favoured Hoani Te Whatahoro's account over Smith or Best's versions: "By the Maoris these aborigines were called Maruiwi, or, more correctly, Mouriuri".<sup>16</sup> The *School Journal* appears to have made the first explicit link between the 'Tangata-whenua' or Maruiwi, and Moriori, but it was acting as a conduit for Smith and Best's ideas when by association it portrayed Moriori as a shiftless people inferior to Maori.

The third story to be published that year, 'The Passing of the Mouriuri', was explicit in its comparison between the first settlers and Maori. "No one knows whence they came, nor why they came. All we know is that they were a race inferior to the stalwart Maoris, and that they were of Melanesian, not Polynesian, origin."<sup>17</sup> The text began with the Mouriuri's conquest by Maori and subsequent migration of the survivors to the Chatham Islands, where they sought peace from their "more virile and more warlike opponents".<sup>18</sup> This move left them "as hopelessly isolated as Robinson Crusoe on his island."<sup>19</sup> Once on the Chathams "they became peace-loving, timorous, and lazy. They had no idea of cultivating the soil, and their food consisted principally of fish, birds, and fern-root."<sup>20</sup> The invasion by Taranaki Maori in 1835 caused their eventual demise: "they are now extinct as a race, not one pure-blooded Moriori being left."<sup>21</sup> This statement provided a dramatic if not entirely accurate conclusion to the account.

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<sup>13</sup> *Rekohu*, p. 315.

<sup>14</sup> 'How the Maoris Came to New Zealand', p. 42.

<sup>15</sup> See Smith, *Vol. II*, p. 71, and Best, 'Maori and Maruiwi', p. 435.

<sup>16</sup> 'How the Maoris Came to New Zealand', p. 42; Smith, *Vol. II*, p. 71.

<sup>17</sup> 'The Passing of the Mouriuri', p. 184.

<sup>18</sup> 'The Passing of the Mouriuri', p. 185.

<sup>19</sup> 'The Passing of the Mouriuri', p. 187.

<sup>20</sup> 'The Passing of the Mouriuri', p. 187.

<sup>21</sup> 'The Passing of the Mouriuri', p. 190.

Written for senior pupils, the article presented a blend of elements from *The Lore of the Whare-wananga*, reliable historical evidence and its own inaccuracies. Throughout the piece the anonymous writer's tone indicated that though Moriori and their ancestors were hapless they were to be pitied, particularly after the 1835 invasion. Percy Smith's theories of Moriori history and culture had clearly influenced the writer, who relayed them as historical fact to schoolchildren at a time when H. D. Skinner and other critics had yet to publish their rebuttals of Smith and Best's ideas. It is unlikely that a series of articles in the *School Journal* in 1916 alone could have had a lasting impression on more than one generation of Pakeha schoolchildren at best. However, stories of mainland Moriori featured not only in the *School Journal* but also in other classroom texts and in general histories published in the following thirty years.<sup>22</sup>

### Stories of New Zealand

In the early decades of the twentieth century, professional opportunities for historians in New Zealand were, like those for ethnologists, very limited. The few historians employed by the University of New Zealand during the interwar period focused largely on teaching rather than writing, and New Zealand history did not feature as an integral part of the tertiary history syllabus. Until the Department of Internal Affairs established its history branches in the late 1930s, most of those who wrote about New Zealand's past were amateur historians who needed other work to pay the bills.<sup>23</sup> Only James Cowan succeeded in scraping a living through publication of newspaper articles and books.<sup>24</sup> However, two men who wrote a number of histories of the pre-contact period for children reversed this trend by developing an interest in stories of New Zealand through their work as publishers. Between them, founder of publishing house Reed, A. H. Reed and his nephew A. W. Reed, wrote or edited numerous texts

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<sup>22</sup> For example: A. W. Shrimpton and Alan E. Mulgan, *Maori and Pakeha. A History of New Zealand* (Auckland, Wellington, Christchurch, Dunedin, London, Sydney, 1921); A. H. Reed, *The Story of New Zealand* (Wellington, 1945); 'The Canoes Voyages of the Polynesians', *School Journal*, Part Three, April 1946, pp. 68-76.

<sup>23</sup> Grant Young, "'The War of Intellectual Independence'?: New Zealand Historians and their History, 1945-72", Auckland University MA thesis (Auckland, 1998), pp. 14, 24.

<sup>24</sup> Chris Hilliard, 'Island Stories. The Writing of New Zealand History 1920-1940', Auckland University MA thesis (Auckland, 1997), p. 54; Chris Hilliard, *The Bookmen's Dominion. Cultural Life in New Zealand 1920-1950* (Auckland, 2006), p. 70.

based loosely on Maori oral traditions and waka narratives that circulated widely in schools.<sup>25</sup>

Whether they were writing for children or general audiences, Smith and Best's versions of early New Zealand history allowed authors of history texts to fill in the gaps in knowledge about the country's past with stories of conquest and endeavour.<sup>26</sup> In the first half of the twentieth century, such histories usually began with what Chris Hilliard has called "Maori prologues".<sup>27</sup> These sketches of pre-contact history often referred to the existence of a pre-Maori population. Although the details varied – in some these settlers were completely absorbed by successive waves of migration while in others they were forced into exile in the Chathams – the texts reflected the influence of Smith and Best's ideas. As characters in prologues to the main event of European colonisation, pre-Maori settlers only made cameo appearances but, when linked to Chatham Islands Moriori, negative attributes could damn by association. For instance, in A. W. Reed's *The Coming of the Maori to Ao-tea-roa*, the "Mouriuri" were a "shiftless people who were soon exterminated or absorbed by the hardier Polynesians."<sup>28</sup> The "old Maori" who narrated *Tales of the Maori*, published by Whitcombe and Tombs, made a clear link between the pre-Maori settlers and Chatham Islands Moriori.

Thus came the first Maoris to Aotea-roa. Being so much stronger and fiercer than most of the earlier comers, the Maoris conquered them. They killed the men, but allowed the women and children to live on in their midst, until they became quite one people with themselves. [...] When the Maoris and the first settlers began fighting, however, there were some of the latter, known in history as the Moriori, who escaped from New Zealand to the Chatham Islands".<sup>29</sup>

However, two other histories for children included mainland Moriori without the negative characteristics. In a *School History of New Zealand*, H. B. Jacob's sketch of

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<sup>25</sup> Edmund Bohan, *The House of Reed 1907-1983* (Christchurch, 2005), pp. 26, 73.

<sup>26</sup> Herries Beattie provided yet another variation on Smith and Best's ideas, arguing that mainland Moriori settled in Canterbury as well as in the Chathams. His view does not appear to be replicated by other authors. Herries Beattie, *Moriori. The Moriori of the South Island* (Dunedin, 1941), p. 7. More recently, Barry Brailsford claimed that members of the Waitaha Nation settled in the Chathams as well as the mainland: Barry Brailsford *Song of Waitaha. The History Of A Nation* (Christchurch, 1994), p. 148.

<sup>27</sup> Chris Hilliard, 'Stories of Becoming. The Centennial Surveys and the Colonization of New Zealand', *NZJH*, 31, 1 (1999), pp. 3-19, p. 12.

<sup>28</sup> A. W. Reed, *The Coming of the Maori to Ao-tea-roa* (Dunedin, Wellington, 1934), p. 11.

<sup>29</sup> *The Story of New Zealand, Book I, Tales of the Maori* (Auckland, Christchurch, Dunedin, Wellington, Melbourne, London, no date), pp. 5, 10.

pre-contact history was matter-of-fact: “With the exception of a small remnant settled in the Chatham Islands and known as Morioris, these people did not survive as a separate race, the Maoris having no doubt killed or enslaved the men and married the women.”<sup>30</sup> A. W. Shrimpton and Alan E. Mulgan’s 1930 history, *Maori and Pakeha*, also included mainland Moriori without the negative comparisons to Maori: “In the meantime, however, a Melanesian-Polynesian people from the Western Pacific had settled large parts of the country. These were the *tangata-whenua* or aboriginal inhabitants of the country.”<sup>31</sup> A footnote to the second sentence named Chatham Islands Moriori as their descendants.<sup>32</sup> Writers, it seemed, picked and chose which details they included from Percy Smith and Elsdon Best’s stories of mainland Moriori.

The authors of two other New Zealand history texts hedged their bets on whether this pre-Maori people were the ancestors of Chatham Islands Moriori. In his popular book, *A Short History of New Zealand*, J. B. Condliffe stated: “These original people have not survived as a separate race, unless indeed the Moriori people of the Chatham Islands were a remnant of them that had been driven out from New Zealand by later comers.”<sup>33</sup> In his centennial survey, one of a series of histories commissioned by the Department of Internal Affairs intended to make New Zealand’s past accessible to New Zealanders, J. C. Beaglehole also distanced himself slightly from the idea of mainland Moriori.<sup>34</sup> “It is said, the last of the Maruiwi fled in seven canoes [...] in search of the Chatham Islands.”<sup>35</sup> However, both Condliffe and Beaglehole ascribed negative characteristics to these potential ancestors of Chatham Islands Moriori. Condliffe described the “tangata-whenua” as “inferior in fighting qualities and in vigour to the later arrivals from Tahiti, and were either killed, enslaved, or absorbed by marriage into the more vigorous people.”<sup>36</sup> Beaglehole drew on Smith and Best’s ideas more directly: “They were a dark-skinned people, tall and slim, with flat noses and restless eyes, and upstanding hair; lazy, little skilled in the arts of living.”<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> H. B. Jacob, *A School History of New Zealand* (Auckland, 1930), p. 1.

<sup>31</sup> Shrimpton and Mulgan, *Maori and Pakeha*, p. 22.

<sup>32</sup> Shrimpton and Mulgan, *Maori and Pakeha*, p. 22.

<sup>33</sup> J. B. Condliffe, *A Short History of New Zealand* (Christchurch, 1925), p. 8.

<sup>34</sup> Hilliard, *The Bookmen’s Dominion*, p. 9.

<sup>35</sup> J. C. Beaglehole, *The Discovery of New Zealand* (Wellington, 1939), p. 10.

<sup>36</sup> Condliffe, p. 8.

<sup>37</sup> Beaglehole, *The Discovery of New Zealand*, p. 10

Although Percy Smith and Elsdon Best provided a script for pre-contact settlement, conquest and exile, the writers they influenced made their own interpretations of those ideas in their stories of New Zealand's early past. It seemed the ethnologists' habit of modifying Maori oral traditions to suit European narrative styles included a second phase whereby their amendments were revised again for new audiences.<sup>38</sup> What remained of the original traditions became pseudo historical accounts along the way. The authors may have differed over whether pre-Maori survivors found their way to the Chatham Islands or were absorbed within Maori communities, but they all presented their work as history rather than conjecture.

School history texts published in the 1940s and 50s continued to reflect *The Lore of the Whare-wananga*, in particular, in their accounts of early New Zealand history and Moriori origins. A. H. Reed explained that Moriori were descended from the Tangatawhenua driven from the mainland to the Chathams where they gradually decreased in numbers. "Some had intermarried with the Maoris, and there are still a few descendants of these in New Zealand, though the Moriori, as a race, is now extinct."<sup>39</sup> In 1946, a story in the *School Journal* introduced this generation of readers to Percy Smith's interpretation of Moriori history and culture

They were a tall, thin-shanked people with flat noses and fuzzy hair. Compared with the Maoris, they were a lazy, shiftless folk, little skilled in the arts of living. These were the Moriori – or *tangata-whenua*, the people of the land – who were found by Toi when he came from Tahiti about 1150, and who were taken in marriage, or fought and slain by the sons of Toi.<sup>40</sup>

In a *School Bulletin* circulated in 1955, Roderick Finlayson also included the Tangatawhenua in his rendition of first migrations to New Zealand, but did not make an explicit link between this people and Chatham Islands Moriori.<sup>41</sup> These writers also presented variations of the theme of Smith and Best's ideas about Moriori.

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<sup>38</sup> See Belich, *Making Peoples*, p. 26 and Gibbons, 'Non-Fiction', p. 62 on Smith and Best's habit of re-presenting Maori oral traditions.

<sup>39</sup> A. H. Reed, *The Story of New Zealand*, p. 46.

<sup>40</sup> 'The Canoes Voyages of the Polynesians', p. 73. Note plagiarism of Beaglehole, *The Discovery of New Zealand*, p. 10.

<sup>41</sup> Roderick Finlayson, *The Coming of the Maori* (Wellington, 1955), p. 34.

## The Rise of the Moa Hunters

The publication of Roger Duff's *The Moa-Hunter Period of Maori Culture* brought new elements to stories of pre-contact New Zealand. Duff wrote his seminal work because he wanted to challenge the idea, held by both Maori and Pakeha of the time, that Maori culture was static prior to contact with Europeans. He argued instead that Maori culture developed well after the Polynesian settlement of New Zealand, while the moa hunter culture arose in the period between settlement and the emergence of a uniquely Maori culture.<sup>42</sup> In choosing a name for the people of this period, Duff rejected the idea of referring to them as Moriori, choosing a label coined by Julius Haast for the people he had hypothesised lived in New Zealand thousands of years before Maori.<sup>43</sup> Though both 'Moriori' and 'moa hunter' brought old baggage to a new usage, Duff preferred the latter.

There are also the strongest objections to using the term Moriori, which to the man on the street has come to mean the tribes immediately preceding the Fleet, but almost invariably with the implication that they were an inferior Melanesian people who thoroughly deserved their fate in being driven away to the Chatham Islands by the superior Polynesians from Hawaiki.<sup>44</sup>

For Duff, the moa hunters were an eastern Polynesian people, separated from Maori only by cultural practices that had yet to undergo the changes that would make them unique to New Zealand.<sup>45</sup>

Although Roger Duff sited his moa hunter paradigm in the context of the Great Fleet migration sequence, he did not believe that a Melanesian people had settled New Zealand. He argued instead that when Percy Smith, Elsdon Best and others decided that New Zealand had been settled prior to the Great Fleet, "it proved too tempting to assign certain respects in which Maori culture differed from that of its tropical Polynesian relatives to a pre-Fleet migration from Melanesia."<sup>46</sup> The idea that Moriori were the remnants of this people was, in Duff's opinion, "an important part of this theory".<sup>47</sup> In the third edition of *The Moa-Hunter Period of Maori Culture*, Duff explained that in the late 1940s he had seen himself as "a spokesman for the tiny minority of the students concerned to correct the widespread popular belief that the

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<sup>42</sup> Duff, pp. 13-16.

<sup>43</sup> See Haast, 'Moas and Moa Hunters', p. 91.

<sup>44</sup> Duff, p. 16.

<sup>45</sup> Duff, p. 14.

<sup>46</sup> Duff, p. 17.

<sup>47</sup> Duff, p. 17.

first New Zealanders had been an ‘inferior’ Melanesian people mis-called Morioris.”<sup>48</sup> So, while the primary motive in writing *The Moa-Hunter Period of Maori Culture* had been to challenge conventional perceptions of Maori cultural development, Duff also wanted to confront popular notions of Moriori history that stemmed from Smith and Best’s theories.

Although Duff published the first edition of this text in 1950, it appears that Michael Turnbull was the first to incorporate Duff’s theory into a history for children in 1960.<sup>49</sup> *The Changing Land* began with the discovery of an early Maori burial site at Wairau bar by a thirteen year-old boy, who was later joined in his attempt to excavate more remains by Roger Duff.<sup>50</sup> The text went on to outline Duff’s findings, placing them within the context of the arrival of Kupe, Toi and Whatonga.<sup>51</sup> Duff’s theory of successive stages of Maori cultural development had introduced a new people into stories of New Zealand’s past.

Other school texts published in the 1960s and early 1970s also transmitted the new orthodoxy, though sometimes with their own twists in the tale. In 1963, A. W. Reed incorporated Duff’s moa hunters into *An Illustrated Encyclopedia of Maori Life*.

Until a few years ago the people who inhabited New Zealand before the Great Migration and even earlier, at the time of the coming of Toi and Whatonga [...] were known to students as Moriori, and were believed to be an inferior race of Melanesian origins. This theory is no longer tenable, and the only correct term that can be used is tangata whenua<sup>52</sup>

This statement represented a volte-face for Reed publishers, who had assiduously transmitted Smith and Best’s versions of early New Zealand history in the past. Another book written by A. W. Reed and published in 1970, *The Evolution of the Maori People*, sketched the development of the moa hunter paradigm, but added new details.

[T]he name Moriori is now reserved for people who first came to the Chatham Islands, probably on a drift voyage from Polynesian. They were a light-hearted, peaceful people who spent most of their time in the open air and wore sealskin

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<sup>48</sup> Duff, *The Moa-Hunter Period of Maori Culture*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (Wellington, 1977), p. x.

<sup>49</sup> Michael Turnbull, *The Changing Land. A Short History of New Zealand for Children* (London, 1960). Keith Sinclair had incorporated Duff’s paradigm into his 1959 general history, *A History of New Zealand* (London, 1959), p. 16.

<sup>50</sup> Turnbull, pp. 1-2.

<sup>51</sup> Turnbull, p. 4.

<sup>52</sup> A. W. Reed, *An Illustrated Encyclopedia of Maori Life* (Wellington and Auckland, 1963), p. 121.

garments and cloaks of woven flax. In later years they were joined by refugees from New Zealand.<sup>53</sup>

In 1966, a school text on Maori culture written by W. J. Phillips managed to blend the old orthodoxy with the new.

After this came Toi and Whatonga to the Bay of Plenty. With their crews they married wives of the tangata whenua. It seems that at this time the North Island was inhabited by partly nomadic communities of the type which later journeyed from both islands to the Chatham Islands, and became known to us as Moriori. [...] The early culture period has been designated “Moa-hunter” by Duff.<sup>54</sup>

It seemed that the introduction of new ideas about pre-contact life created further potential for uncertainty over Maori and Moriori origins and settlement. H. D. B. Dansey wrote of his confusion in the introduction to his second edition of *How the Maoris came to Aotearoa*.

So the scholars said there had been no Morioris in New Zealand before the Maori came – I’m glad I hadn’t said there were – and Kupe’s voyage was not the first and there had been no fleet and the last Hawaiki was Northland not Tahiti and the Whatonga story was deeply suspect and so on. [...] I began to wonder if our ancestors ever got here at all.<sup>55</sup>

Duff’s challenge succeeded in undermining Smith and Best’s influence where H. D. Skinner and Sir Peter Buck’s refutations had failed, though authors’ interpretations of his ideas created shifts in meaning from Duff’s original ideas.

The reason for Roger Duff’s success in challenging Percy Smith and Elsdon Best’s ideas about Moriori may lie in the timing of its adoption by children’s authors. Although *The Moa-Hunter Period of Maori Culture* was published in 1950, it was not transmitted through school texts until the 1960s. At this time, the issues facing contemporary Maori developed a higher profile among Pakeha because, as James Belich observes, it was harder to ignore a large urban Maori population than it had been to ignore a smaller rural-based group.<sup>56</sup> The flow of Maori families from rural areas to cities in the 1950s and 60s not only made them more visible to urban-based Pakeha, it also contributed to participation by Maori in new forms of political

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<sup>53</sup> A. W. Reed, *The Evolution of the Maori People* (Wellington, Auckland. Sydney, Melbourne, 1970), p. 8.

<sup>54</sup> W. J. Phillips, *Maori Life and Custom* (Wellington, Auckland, Sydney, Melbourne, 1966), p. 19.

<sup>55</sup> H. D. B. Dansey, *How the Maoris came to Aotearoa*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Wellington, Sydney, London, 1976), pp. 1-2.

<sup>56</sup> James Belich, *Paradise Reforged. A History of the New Zealanders from the 1880s to the Year 2000* (Auckland, 2001), p. 475.

activism.<sup>57</sup> Heated responses to new forms of political activism from Pakeha politicians and political commentators, as well as increased media coverage of political protests by Maori groups, made it difficult for Pakeha to ignore increasing tensions in bicultural relations.<sup>58</sup>

Although Maori political activism had a much longer history, modern forms of protest had their origins in the emergence of youth culture in the 1950s, in which young Maori challenged the more conservative leadership of the New Zealand Maori Council and the Maori Women's Welfare League.<sup>59</sup> In the 1960s, the new wave of protest brought together disparate groups with backgrounds in trade unions, student political activism, and campaigns against the Vietnam War and sporting links with South Africa.<sup>60</sup> Spiritual, social, and economic marginalisation caused by land alienation became the rallying point for these groups.<sup>61</sup> In particular, the "last land-grab" – the Maori Affairs Amendment Act 1967, which allowed the ministry to intervene in the administration of Maori land and re-designate land held by fewer than five owners from Maori land to European land – triggered resistance across Maori communities. While the Maori Women's Welfare League and the New Zealand Maori Council formally protested the policy through conventional channels, the Maori students and graduates who formed the political group Nga Tamatoa responded with a campaign of civil disobedience. Media coverage of protests against the Act focused on 'radical' incidents, further politicising Maori political activism for their Pakeha audiences.<sup>62</sup>

Another protest, this time led by the Maori Women's Welfare League, had implications for the education system and New Zealand children's literature. In 1964, a Department of Education publication, *Washday at the Pa*, became the focus for

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<sup>57</sup> Ranginui Walker, 'Maori People since 1950', in *The Oxford History of New Zealand*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., edited by Geoffrey W. Rice (Auckland, 1992), pp. 498-519, p. 519.

<sup>58</sup> Aroha Harris, *Hiko. Forty Years of Maori Protest* (Wellington, 2004), pp. 13-15.

<sup>59</sup> Harris, p. 15.

<sup>60</sup> Even Poata-Smith, 'He Pokeke Uenuku I Tu Ai: The Evolution of Contemporary Maori Protest', in *Nga Take. Ethnic Relations and Racism in Aotearoa/New Zealand*, edited by Paul Spoonley, David Pearson and Cluny Macpherson (Palmerston North, 1991), pp. 97-116, pp. 98-99.

<sup>61</sup> Hauraki Greenland, 'Maori Ethnicity as Ideology', in *Nga Take. Ethnic Relations and Racism in Aotearoa/New Zealand*, edited by Paul Spoonley, David Pearson and Cluny Macpherson (Palmerston North, 1991), pp. 90-107, p. 93.

<sup>62</sup> Harris, pp. 13, 24.

criticism of stereotypical portrayals of Maori.<sup>63</sup> At a time when urban Maori were under pressure to assimilate rapidly into Pakeha society, members of the Maori Women's Welfare League and other critics saw the story of a stereotypical Maori family living in poverty in a rural setting as damaging for Maori children. The story also contained cultural inaccuracies – such as a photograph of a child standing on a stovetop – which critics argued was indicative of racism in the education system.<sup>64</sup> While efforts to incorporate a less Eurocentric perspective in children's literature had already begun, the protests sparked by *Washday at the Pa* demonstrated that this shift in the telling of stories of New Zealand was very much a gradual process.<sup>65</sup> When the Department of Education withdrew copies of the book from schools and destroyed them, media criticism of its response suggested that Pakeha were not necessarily receptive to Maori critiques of the education system in the 1960s.<sup>66</sup>

Pakeha responses to an increase in Maori political activism varied widely. The rise in protest action by Maori groups occurred at a time when sectors of Pakeha society were engaging with new ideas spawned in counter-culture movements, which fostered a willingness to listen to concerns from Maori.<sup>67</sup> However, some Pakeha involved in identity politics saw ethnicity as a distraction from the main issue, whether it be women's rights or the class struggle, and proved less tolerant of Maori political aspirations over time.<sup>68</sup> Other Pakeha reacted defensively to all forms of Maori political activism, with common arguments against it including the assertion that there were almost no 'full-blooded' Maori remaining to claim Maori ethnic status, that Maori culture was innately inferior to European cultures, and that British colonisation had rescued Maori from savagery.<sup>69</sup>

In this climate, stories of a Maori conquest of an earlier New Zealand people became, for some Pakeha, not only an explanation of migration sequences but also evidence to condemn Maori political aspirations. In the 1960s and 1970s, these Pakeha countered

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<sup>63</sup> Harris, pp. 17, 20; Ans Westra, *Washday at the Pa* (Christchurch, 1964).

<sup>64</sup> Barbara Brookes, 'Nostalgia for "innocent homely pleasures"; The 1964 New Zealand Controversy over *Washday at the Pa*', *Gender and History*, 9, 2 (1997), pp. 242-261, p. 251.

<sup>65</sup> Gilderdale, p. 539.

<sup>66</sup> Brookes, p. 255.

<sup>67</sup> Belich, *Paradise Reforged*, p. 475.

<sup>68</sup> Paul Spoonley, *Racism and Ethnicity*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Oxford, 1993), p. 100.

<sup>69</sup> Angela Ballara, *Proud To Be White. A Survey of Pakeha Prejudice in New Zealand* (Auckland, 1986), p. 164.

claims for land rights made by Maori with accusations of a brutal colonisation by Maori of New Zealand's first settlers – variously Moriori or moa hunters – that therefore undermined Maori claims of injustice.<sup>70</sup> In 1966, W. H. Oliver suggested that the story of a pre-contact conquest by Maori persisted because it served a need among Pakeha.

[O]ne may be permitted to wonder, is not this “error” strangely related to the myth of the possessors? If the Maoris themselves could be represented as an invading, conquering, expropriating people, would not this story serve to justify the activities of a race of subsequent conquerors, to turn the charge of expropriation upon the victims themselves?<sup>71</sup>

However, Pakeha who invoked a Maori conquest of an indigenous people to defend Britain's colonisation of New Zealand may have – on one level at least – seen themselves as repeating lessons learnt in classrooms, rather than attacking Maori aspirations.

### Contested History

A brief debate in the *NZ Listener* in 1974 demonstrated the means by which these stories were used to attack contemporary Maori. In response to a claim made by Ranginui Walker – that Pakeha no longer had the right to determine what was right or wrong for Maori – Hilda Phillips wrote an article that cited mainland Moriori as evidence in her rebuttal.<sup>72</sup> In discussing land rights, Phillips contended: “A point worthy of consideration is that Maoris did not inherit the land by divine right. The Moriori were here before them.”<sup>73</sup> Later, after restating Walker's argument that a just society ought to recognise Maori as the “indigenous language” she refuted this by stating: “But how *just* were the principles applied by the Maori in respect of the indigenous Moriori?”<sup>74</sup> These statements reflect the two main ways in which Percy Smith and Elsdon Best's Moriori theories were used as evidence in such arguments: that Maori were not the first to settle in New Zealand, and that their alleged treatment of Moriori somehow disqualified them from compensation for land and other resources lost through the Crown's actions.

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<sup>70</sup> Michael King, *Being Pakeha Now: Reflections and Recollections of a White Native*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Auckland, 2004), p. 192.

<sup>71</sup> W. H. Oliver ‘History, Myths In New Zealand’, in *An Encyclopaedia of New Zealand*, edited by A. H. McLintock (Wellington, 1966), pp. 83-88, p. 88.

<sup>72</sup> Hilda Phillips, ‘Racial Degrees: More Equal Than Equal?’, *NZ Listener*, 30 March 1974, p. 8; Ranginui Walker, ‘Rata's White Paper’, *NZ Listener*, 29 December 1973, p. 22.

<sup>73</sup> Phillips, p. 8.

<sup>74</sup> Phillips, p. 8.

Walker responded in his regular column printed in the *NZ Listener* with a rebuttal of Phillips' argument and outline of his own theory of early human history in New Zealand.

The myth of the Moriori is one of New Zealand's favourites. It serves to salve pakeha conscience for the betrayal of the Treaty of Waitangi and the oppression of the Maori. The myth has been used to justify the takeover of Maori lands ('the Maoris did it to the Moriori') and the suppression of the Maori language.<sup>75</sup>

He based his account of the origins and culture of the first New Zealanders on Roger Duff's moa-hunter paradigm, but stated that "[t]he Maori migrants of the 14<sup>th</sup> century were in effect absorbed by the tangata whenua."<sup>76</sup> He also refuted the idea that the original settlers had been Melanesian.

The myth that the Moriori were of inferior Melanesian stock to the more vigorous Maoris does not bear up in the face of traditional or even modern scientific evidence. The aboriginal inhabitants of New Zealand and the migrants of the 14<sup>th</sup> century were of Polynesian stock and culture. They lived amicably for 200 years before tribal wars broke out and the tribes as we now know them emerged.<sup>77</sup>

Although Walker's version of the migration sequences from Polynesia was influenced by Roger Duff's analysis, its reference to fourteenth century migrants appears to reflect an element of Percy Smith's Great Fleet migration.<sup>78</sup> This is indicative of the confusion surrounding early New Zealand history in the period between the publication of Duff's seminal text and a new analysis of *The Lore of the Whare-wananga* that appeared in 1976.

David Simmons' study of migration traditions, *The Great New Zealand Myth*, centred on *The Lore of the Whare-wananga*, which he argued was the original source for what he called "modern New Zealand folktales."<sup>79</sup> His analysis built on an article he had co-written with Bruce Biggs in 1970.<sup>80</sup> In his expanded argument Simmons observed that although some versions of the discovery and settlement stories differed slightly in their details from Percy Smith's text, they all included similar chronologies, a sequence of discovery and settlement that spanned from Kupe through to Toi, and the

<sup>75</sup> R. J. Walker, 'Moriori Myth-Makers', *NZ Listener*, 11 May 1974, pp. 32-33p. 32.

<sup>76</sup> Walker, 'Moriori Myth-Makers', p. 33.

<sup>77</sup> Walker, 'Moriori Myth-Makers', p. 33.

<sup>78</sup> Walker, 'Moriori Myth-Makers', p. 32.

<sup>79</sup> Simmons, *The Great New Zealand Myth*, p. 7.

<sup>80</sup> Simmons and Biggs, 'The Sources of "The Lore of the Whare-Wananga"', *JPS*, pp. 22-42.

arrival of the Fleet.<sup>81</sup> In his analysis of the likelihood that *The Lore of the Wharewananga*'s content stemmed from genuine oral traditions, he found that: "The orthodox version does not represent authentic Maori tradition."<sup>82</sup> To qualify as 'authentic' tradition an account could not be the work of an individual, nor should it be a compilation of several traditions or borrowed from another iwi's tradition. However, the tradition should occur in a number of sources, or be present in another form such as waiata and karakia, or found in early sources to rule out its development since contact with Europeans.<sup>83</sup> Instead, Simmons established that the "Tangatawhenua" account was not included "in any of the Matorohanga or Pohuhu manuscripts and the source of much of it is undoubtedly Whatahoro himself."<sup>84</sup> He also stated categorically that Europeans had been the first to encounter Chatham Islands Moriori, and Maori had no knowledge of the island group or its inhabitants prior to that discovery. "All the other tangata whenua or original people stories in the *Lore* have even less justification to be regarded as authentic tradition."<sup>85</sup>

Three years later, M. P. K. Sorrenson produced a study of the relationship between Maori oral traditions and Pakeha myth that supported Simmons and Biggs' work. In *Maori Origins and Migrations*, first published in 1979, Sorrenson explored the roots of contemporary Pakeha beliefs about early Maori history, including the existence of a pre-Maori settlement. He argued that "myth-making can be a consequence of an over-confident application of the scientific method: if they are not careful, scholars will find what they are looking for."<sup>86</sup> However, Sorrenson contended that not only Pakeha but also Maori were involved in this process. Maori had their own agenda in sharing oral traditions with Pakeha, which may have included establishing title to land and asserting an iwi's mana. The story of the Great Fleet was of significance to twentieth century Maori because it emphasised a long history of Maori occupation of New Zealand.<sup>87</sup> In the case of mainland Moriori, Percy Smith and Elsdon Best's desire to explain Polynesian origins meshed with Hoani Te Whatahoro's undeclared motives in presenting the two men with answers to their quest. The result was the

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<sup>81</sup> Simmons, *The Great New Zealand Myth*, p. 7.

<sup>82</sup> Simmons, *The Great New Zealand Myth*, p. 59.

<sup>83</sup> Simmons, *The Great New Zealand Myth*, pp. 10-11.

<sup>84</sup> Simmons, *The Great New Zealand Myth*, p. 65.

<sup>85</sup> Simmons, *The Great New Zealand Myth*, p. 66.

<sup>86</sup> Sorrenson, *Maori Origins and Migrations*, p. 33.

<sup>87</sup> Sorrenson, *Maori Origins and Migrations*, pp. 84, 86.

generation of a profoundly inaccurate version of history that persisted in school texts more than thirty years after *The Lore of the Whare-wananga*'s publication.

### **A Matter of Interpretation**

A common thread running through these stories of New Zealand's early past, whether they were based on Percy Smith and Elsdon Best's theories or Roger Duff's paradigm, was their authors' embellishments on the original texts. Just as Smith and Best refashioned Maori oral traditions to fit their notions of narrative style, those authors who re-presented the ethnologists' ideas for children also wove new elements into the stories. This was a matter not only of catering to a different audience, perhaps, but also of the authors' interpretation of the original ideas. Duff's moa hunter paradigm, in particular, offered a challenge to children's writers because it undermined popular notions of the past. The story of New Zealand's early human past was recast, with moa hunters and not mainland Moriori as the country's first inhabitants, though there appeared to be some confusion among the authors quoted in this chapter over whether or not the moa hunters were distinct from Maori. Interpretations of Duff's ideas led to new versions of his story.

Teachers' classroom lessons added a second layer of interpretation to stories of New Zealand. School texts may have repopulated the past with moa hunters in the 1960s, but this did not necessarily mean that teachers faithfully reproduced the ideas contained in the texts in their explanations of New Zealand's past. As Colin McGeorge observes, racism persisted in the school curriculum because those who designed and taught the lessons had received prolonged exposure to negative messages about Maori in their own education.<sup>88</sup> It may be that the transmission of ideas about mainland Moriori continued in some classrooms for similar reasons. Teachers' interpretations of the new versions of New Zealand's early settlement may have contributed to a confusion between mainland Moriori and moa-hunters as victims of Maori conquest that has been noted by James Belich.<sup>89</sup> However, Roger Duff's challenge to ideas of mainland Moriori – together with David Simmons, Bruce Biggs and Keith Sorrenson's later work – did at least have an effect in the way that

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<sup>88</sup> Colin McGeorge, 'Race and the Maori in the New Zealand Primary School Curriculum Since 1877', *Australia and New Zealand History of Education Society*, 10 (1981), pp. 13-23, p. 22.

<sup>89</sup> Belich, *Making Peoples*, p. 25.

stories of New Zealand's early past were told in texts. In the history books, at least, mainland Moriori vanished, though their memory lived on in the minds of many Pakeha New Zealanders.

## 5. Clearing the Confusion

### Introduction

Chapter Five focuses on the 1980s, a decade in which Moriori descendants challenged the widely held belief that they were an extinct people. The chapter begins by outlining this belief's context, including public announcements of the death of the 'last' Moriori, Tommy Solomon. All the texts examined to this point portrayed Moriori as a people of the past, and the first texts assessed in Chapter Five shared this assumption. Bill Saunders' documentary, *Mori*, which screened on television in 1980, set out to challenge Percy Smith and Elsdon Best's orthodoxy with the premise that the last of the Moriori died in 1933.<sup>1</sup> This chapter considers both the documentary's portrayal of Moriori history and culture, and its contribution to a Moriori cultural revival. It goes on to examine two articles written by Douglas Sutton, whose archaeological analysis of sixteenth century Chatham Islands sites extended H. D. Skinner's earlier work on Moriori culture.<sup>2</sup> The chapter then explores Michael King's post-contact history of Moriori in depth, gauging its influence on New Zealanders' ideas about Moriori through reviews in the popular press and in journals.<sup>3</sup> Finally, Chapter Five examines possible explanations for King's success in reaching general audiences when most of Smith and Best's critics had failed to make an impression beyond academia.

### The Last of the Moriori

In March 1933, New Zealand newspapers heralded the end of the Moriori people. On Monday March 20<sup>th</sup>, *The Press* declared: "A special message to the Press Association by radio from the Chatham Islands announces the death of Mr Tommy Solomon, the last of the Moriori race."<sup>4</sup> The obituary followed with a summary of Solomon's life, cited Elsdon Best as a source for its outline of Moriori history, and attributed the decrease in the Moriori population to the introduction of European diseases. While the obituary

<sup>1</sup> *Mori* (video-recording), Television New Zealand, 1980.

<sup>2</sup> Sutton, 'A Culture History'; Douglas G. Sutton, 'The Whence of the Moriori', *NZJH*, 19, 1 (1985), pp. 3-13, p. 3.

<sup>3</sup> King, *Mori*. *A People Rediscovered*.

<sup>4</sup> 'Last Of An Old Race', *The Press* March 20 1933, p. 11.

acknowledged that Solomon's descendants remained on the island, it contended: "His children are not pure Morioris, and with his death the race has become extinct."<sup>5</sup> Similar obituaries appeared in the *New Zealand Herald* and the *Otago Daily Times*.<sup>6</sup> All shared the assumption 'pure' Moriori status was determined by an individual's full complement of Moriori parents and grandparents.

The concept of Tommy Solomon as the last 'full-blooded' Moriori was the legacy of late Victorian scientific racialism, which categorised people according to colour and culture.<sup>7</sup> In particular, it reflected changes to the concept of 'race' brought through developments in physical anthropology, where racial classifications became an allegedly precise measure of perceived difference.<sup>8</sup> The children of parents from separate 'races' blurred boundaries between these quasi-scientific categories, presenting a challenge to classification that was denoted by the use of phrases such as 'half-caste' to ascribe ethnic identity.<sup>9</sup> Tension surrounding racial purity usually focused on children born to one European and one non-European parent, but in the case of the Solomons, the crucial matter was shared Moriori and Maori ancestry.

The Solomon family name was carried on by Tommy Solomon's children and their families, but because their mother Rene had Moriori-Maori parentage, the Solomon children did not meet the 'full-blooded' criteria of the time. Neither did members of other families, such as the Preece and Davis families, who were also of Moriori descent.<sup>10</sup> Between 1916 and 1971, official statistics on 'race' were derived from census questions that required New Zealanders to state the fractions of their racial origin. Those of mixed Maori and European origins were counted as either Maori or European depending on the 'degrees of blood' in their ancestry. Yet, though Moriori descendants could have been

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<sup>5</sup> 'Last Of An Old Race', p. 11.

<sup>6</sup> 'Last Of Race', *New Zealand Herald*, 20 March 1933, p. 10; 'Last Of Old Race', *Otago Daily Times*, 22 March 1933, p. 11.

<sup>7</sup> Malik, pp. 91-92.

<sup>8</sup> Edward W. Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (New York, 1993), p. 101; Catherine Hall, 'Introduction: thinking the postcolonial, thinking the empire', in *Cultures of Empire. Colonizers in Britain and the empire in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries*, edited by Catherine Hall (Manchester, 2000), pp. 1-36, p. 25.

<sup>9</sup> See Ann Laura Stoler, *Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power. Race and the Intimate in Colonial Rule* (Beverly, Los Angeles, and London, 2002), p. 83.

<sup>10</sup> King, *Moriori*, pp. 190-91.

classified as ‘Mori’ under this system, the rule only applied to Maori.<sup>11</sup> Tommy Solomon’s grandson, Maui Solomon, observed that assumptions that the Mori people ended with his grandfather’s death were arbitrary.

With the death of Tommy Solomon in 1933, everyone proclaimed the Mori to be extinct. This overlooked the fact that many descendants of Tommy and those of other Mori families had survived him. However, historians, the media, anthropologists, archaeologists and many others from this time onwards referred to the Mori only in the past tense. [...] So effective had been the propaganda woven about the Mori that descendants themselves were frozen into inertia.<sup>12</sup> Mori themselves broke through the inertia, commemorating Tommy Solomon with a statue unveiled in 1986 and commissioning Michael King to write their post-contact history.<sup>13</sup>

### **A Pilgrimage to the Chathams**

Although the 1980s was to witness the revival of Mori culture and identity, even as late as 1985 there was little sign of a Mori presence on Chatham Island.<sup>14</sup> Accordingly, in 1980 two texts on Mori history and culture produced by Pakeha continued a tradition of referring to Mori in the past tense. In 1980, Pakeha film-maker Bill Saunders set out to make a documentary on the Mori that centred on a journey by two of Tommy Solomon’s grandchildren to the islands where their ancestors had lived for centuries. The documentary explored the Chatham Islands’ past and present through the eyes of Margaret Hamilton and Charles Solomon, who met first with academics from Otago University and then travelled to Chatham Island, where they participated in re-enactments of aspects of Mori history.<sup>15</sup> Saunders made the film to counter prevailing beliefs among New Zealanders about Mori, whom he portrayed as a deeply spiritual people whose skilful adaptations to the harsh Chatham Islands’ environment had included ritualised combat to manage conflict.<sup>16</sup>

It seemed to me extraordinary that a race of people had died out in such recent memory and yet so little was known about them by the average New Zealander.

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<sup>11</sup> ‘Review of the Measurement of Ethnicity Background Paper’, New Zealand Department of Statistics, February 2001, p. 2.

<sup>12</sup> Maui Solomon, ‘Review of *Mori: A People Rediscovered*’, *Te Karanga*, 6, 1 (1990), pp. 25-27, p. 25.

<sup>13</sup> Solomon, ‘Forward’, p. 9.

<sup>14</sup> Solomon, ‘Review’, p. 26.

<sup>15</sup> Marcia Russell, ‘Islands of the Myths’, *NZ Listener*, 8 November 1980, pp. 14-15, p. 14.

<sup>16</sup> *Mori* (video-recording).

[...] We have tried to place the Moriori in a proper context and, I suppose, we hoped to restore the balance a bit.<sup>17</sup>  
 His interest in the islands' history stemmed from a visit to Chatham Island in 1975, where some of his own ancestors had lived in the 1870s.

The making of the documentary, *Moriori*, heralded changes for Moriori living on the mainland. Participating in the documentary had proved unsettling for both Hamilton and Solomon, who had considered themselves Maori but discovered that all but one of their great-grandparents were Moriori.<sup>18</sup> Of Tommy Solomon's surviving relatives, only Bully Solomon and his family lived in the Chatham Islands at the time of the documentary's screening. The Waitangi Tribunal's report on Chatham Islands land claims, *Rekohu*, contended that Bill Saunders' documentary was responsible for raising the profile of Moriori in the media.<sup>19</sup> Maui Solomon stated that the documentary's screening was also the catalyst for a Solomon family reunion in 1983, which strengthened the Moriori cultural revival.<sup>20</sup> Ironically, though Saunders had made the film to document a lost people, it played a part in Moriori resurgence. In 2000, Michael King discussed the documentary's influence.

Its weak point, perhaps, was that Bill spoke of Tommy Solomon as being the last Moriori, as if the whole show was over and done with. But the very fact that it was shown and the Solomon family were involved had a galvanising effect. It sparked a cultural renaissance for Moriori that was parallel with the Maori renaissance.<sup>21</sup>

However, the Waitangi Tribunal report sited the resurgence's origins in political protests during the 1960s and 70s made by Moriori living on Chatham Island, as well as the return of Bully Solomon and his family to Chatham Island in the 1950s and their subsequent assertions that they were Moriori.<sup>22</sup> The documentary alone may not have been the catalyst for change, but it did raise the profile of the Moriori and their history through an accessible format, and presented a further challenge to Percy Smith and Elsdon Best's versions of that history.

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<sup>17</sup> Russell, p. 14.

<sup>18</sup> Russell, p. 14.

<sup>19</sup> *Rekohu*, Waitangi Tribunal Report 2001, Wai 64 (Wellington, 2001), p. 16.

<sup>20</sup> Solomon, 'Forward', p. 9.

<sup>21</sup> Philip Matthews, 'The not-lost tribe', *NZ Listener*, 12 August 2000, p. 27.

<sup>22</sup> *Rekohu*, p. 16.

## A Culture History of the Moriori

In 1980, Douglas Sutton's analysis of evidence gathered from archaeological sites in Durham, on Chatham Island, offered the most detailed picture of Moriori culture available at that time.<sup>23</sup> Sutton excavated and examined archaeological evidence from several sites occupied during the sixteenth century. He concluded that people had lived on the island for about the same period as in mainland New Zealand. The first settlers probably arrived prior to the thirteenth century and participated in a rapid cultural adaptation to their new environment. These adaptations helped sustain a population of about 2000 people in the island group, though their economy was never robust.<sup>24</sup> Sutton observed that linguistic evidence supported his argument that the population was Maori in origin, as did analysis of material culture.<sup>25</sup> Like H. D. Skinner, he framed his analysis within the assumption that the culture he studied was that of an extinct people, claiming that "[t]he death of the Moriori must now be seen as one of the major events of New Zealand history."<sup>26</sup> Sutton attributed the post-contact Moriori population decline to several factors, including the introduction of disease, decimation of fur seals on the islands, killings by Te Ati Awa Maori, and a post-invasion "profound cultural dislocation".<sup>27</sup>

Although Douglas Sutton condemned Percy Smith and Elsdon Best's influence upon the writing of Moriori history, he also placed the Moriori population decline within a fatal impact analysis. Sutton made it clear that the apparent lack of concern among New Zealanders for the Moriori "extinction" was due to "the teachings of corrupted Canoe traditions and related *Maruiwi* and *Tangata whenua* traditions [...] in schools", which he said reflected "late Victorian racial attitudes and not historical truth."<sup>28</sup> But one aspect of Victorian racist thinking crept into his own explanation for a Moriori decline when he argued, "the very nature of the culture itself made certain its death."<sup>29</sup> According to

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<sup>23</sup> Sutton, 'A Culture History', pp. 67-93.

<sup>24</sup> Sutton, 'A Culture History', p. 67.

<sup>25</sup> Sutton, 'A Culture History', pp. 70-74, 80-83.

<sup>26</sup> Sutton, 'A Culture History', p. 68.

<sup>27</sup> Sutton, 'A Culture History', p. 87.

<sup>28</sup> Sutton, 'A Culture History', p. 68.

<sup>29</sup> Sutton, 'A Culture History', p. 88.

Sutton, a tradition of managing conflict without resorting to warfare left Moriori ill equipped to deal with the invasion by Te Ati Awa Maori. Nor were they able to encompass the challenge presented to their spirituality by European modernity. He concluded: “The adaptation which the Moriori had made to their isolated environment seems to have made them vulnerable when that environment was entered by others.”<sup>30</sup> Although Sutton’s interpretation of archaeological evidence provided an analysis of Moriori culture as being adaptive prior to contact with Europeans and Maori, in his reckoning this trait was overwhelmed by the challenges experienced by Moriori in the nineteenth century. The idea that Moriori could overcome environmental challenges but find their doom in a cultural confrontation seems at best to reflect a fatal impact view of events in mid-nineteenth century Chatham Islands. Given that at the time of writing Sutton, like many others, believed Moriori no longer existed as people this was perhaps understandable, but it did somewhat undermine his portrayal of Moriori as the antithesis of Percy Smith and Elsdon Best’s theories.

Yet, in other respects, Douglas Sutton’s analysis of Moriori material culture provided a strong challenge to stories of New Zealand that construed the Chatham Islanders as timid and feckless. For instance, rather than view the Moriori rejection of warfare as cowardly, Sutton argued it enabled Moriori kin groups to survive in close confines with their neighbours, and was evidence instead of a skilful adaptation to their situation. In this reading, Moriori cultural development was not indicative of a people more primitive than Maori, but of a capable people who made effective use of limited resources.<sup>31</sup> In 1985, he directly challenged what he called the “Maruiwi or Tangata Whenua myth” in an article published in the *New Zealand Journal of History*, where he observed that Percy Smith and Elsdon Best’s influence still lingered in the education system despite the rejection of their theories more than thirty years previously.<sup>32</sup> Many New Zealanders continued to hold flawed ideas about Moriori history and culture, despite the work of H. D. Skinner, Sir Peter Buck, Roger Duff and Sutton himself, and even though those refutations had finally filtered through to school history texts.

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<sup>30</sup> Sutton, ‘A Culture History’, p. 88.

<sup>31</sup> Sutton, ‘A Culture History’, p. 68.

<sup>32</sup> Douglas G. Sutton, ‘The Whence of the Moriori’, *NZJH*, 19, 1 (1985), pp. 3-13, p. 3.

## A Cultural Rebirth

Douglas Sutton's concerns were shared by Michael King, who in 1989 published a post-contact history that succeeded in drawing attention to Moriori past and present. In the 1970s and early 1980s, King had published several texts on aspects of Maori society, including *Te Puea* and *Maori*, which attracted acclaim in some circles and drew criticism from others.<sup>33</sup> In his autobiography, *Being Pakeha Now*, King explained that his focus on Maori topics stemmed in part from criticism by Maori political activists in the early 1970s that Pakeha historians ignored Maori history. King, who had a Masters degree in history from Waikato University and a career in journalism, began to write about Maori subjects. However, from the late seventies his work drew criticism from some Maori commentators concerned that King's publications were a form of cultural appropriation and exploitation. Although King acknowledged their concerns, he argued that his goal was to educate Pakeha about Maori rather than to exploit Maori for his own gain, and that almost all the texts concerned were initiated in response to requests from Maori. Yet, though he defended his actions, King stopped writing on Maori subjects.<sup>34</sup>

When approached by Maui Solomon to write a post-contact history of Moriori in 1986, King did not accept the commission until assured that the offer came from a majority decision by Moriori descendants. King had long been interested in Moriori history, and dismayed by the "persistence of inaccurate notions in the public mind" regarding it.<sup>35</sup> However, like most other New Zealanders, he viewed Moriori as a people of the past and stated: "When I first visited the Chatham Islands in December 1986, I believed it was to write a requiem for an extinct culture."<sup>36</sup> Although he was acquainted with Maori and Pakeha views on Moriori history, expressed in talkback radio debates and in letters to the editor columns, King realised that he knew nothing of how Moriori descendants viewed their own history.<sup>37</sup> Once on Chatham Island he discovered that the issue of 'full-blood'

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<sup>33</sup> Michael King, *Te Puea: a Biography* (Wellington, 1972); Michael King, *Maori: a Photographic and Social History* (Auckland, 1984). King quotes from two of the most critical reviews in *Being Pakeha Now*, pp. 184-86.

<sup>34</sup> King, *Being Pakeha Now*, pp. 70, 181-82, 184, 189.

<sup>35</sup> King, *Moriori*, p. 11.

<sup>36</sup> Michael King, *Tread Softly for You Tread on My Life* (Auckland, 2001), p. 139.

<sup>37</sup> King, *Tread Softly*, p. 141.

was as “irrelevant to their sense of ethnicity as it is to Maori, Pakeha or English folk. They were descended from Moriori. They identified as Moriori. End of equation.”<sup>38</sup> After meeting with a number of Moriori descendants King accepted the commission because the request had come from the “‘proprietors’ of Moriori history”, and because he believed it was time to end the confusion surrounding that history.<sup>39</sup> He also confessed to finding the topic “wholly engaging”.<sup>40</sup> The commission of *Moriori: A People Rediscovered* by Moriori descendants signalled a departure from other texts on Moriori history, which were all written from a non-Moriori perspective.

Moriori descendants chose Michael King to write *Moriori* because of his reputation as a social historian. King’s brief was to write a post-contact history based on “all written evidence and, wherever possible, personal interviews with people who could provide useful information about the Moriori.”<sup>41</sup> The project was chosen by Moriori as the “most effective means of communicating to the wider general public the story of Rekohu’s original inhabitants.”<sup>42</sup> However, the decision to draw public attention to Moriori history was opposed by one descendant, Riwai Reece, who believed that such a move would increase tensions between Moriori and Chatham Islands Maori. King may have been requested to write the post-contact history of Moriori and so avoid condemnation for cultural appropriation, but highlighting the 1835 invasion of the Chathams by Te Ati Awa Maori and its aftermath would bring other risks, just as Reece anticipated.<sup>43</sup> Aware of the contentious nature of aspects of the history he wrote, King ended his introduction to *Moriori* with a statement on the provenance of the evidence on which he based his account of nineteenth century Te Ati Awa Maori’s actions on the Chathams. The evidence had come from Te Ati Awa sources, including oral histories and testimony of Maori witnesses at the Native Land Court in the 1870s.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> King, *Tread Softly*, p. 142.

<sup>39</sup> King, *Moriori*, p. 11.

<sup>40</sup> King, *Moriori*, p. 11.

<sup>41</sup> Solomon, ‘Forward’, p. 9.

<sup>42</sup> Solomon, ‘Forward’, p. 9.

<sup>43</sup> King, *Tread Softly*, p. 142.

<sup>44</sup> King, *Moriori*, p. 12.

As a post-contact history *Moriori* focused largely on the period between 1791, when the crew of the *Chatham* made landfall at Kaingaroa Harbour on Chatham Island, and Tommy Solomon's death in 1933. The prologue began with an account of Solomon's funeral, followed by a passage in which King declared his own perspective on the history of ideas about Moriori. "Nobody in New Zealand – and few elsewhere in the world – has been subjected to group slander as intense and as damaging as that heaped upon the Moriori."<sup>45</sup> King argued that this slander was still widespread when he researched the book.

In the late 1980s, letters to the editor and contributions to talkback radio revealed that large numbers of New Zealanders still saw the Moriori as a dark-skinned, thick-lipped, wide-nostrilled race who inhabited New Zealand before the Maori and were forced to flee in the face of superior Polynesian enterprise and vitality. At the same time another group, largely Maori, were asserting that the Moriori had never existed, that they were no more than a Pakeha-created myth designed to justify European oppression of the Maori. Both views are equally wrong; and both are legacies of a history that is little known and understood even less.<sup>46</sup>

The passage ended with an assertion of continued Moriori survival, with King declaring that Moriori descendants now saw themselves as the indigenous people of Rekohu, with a heritage that was far from primitive.<sup>47</sup>

After this rather passionate prologue, *Moriori* settled into a brief account of pre-contact life among Moriori in the Chatham Islands. King based this first chapter largely on Douglas Sutton's analyses of Moriori material culture, supplementing it with information garnered in conversation with David Simmons and Rhys Richards, and Lyndsay Head.<sup>48</sup> He also briefly mentioned debate between turn-of-the-century scholars regarding Moriori origins, concluding: "Despite these obfuscations, there is no mystery about who the Moriori are or where they came from. Their language, artifacts and bodily remains show them to have been Polynesian."<sup>49</sup> In his description of pre-contact Moriori culture, King emphasised that though it was Polynesian in origin, it also possessed features unique to

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<sup>45</sup> King, *Moriori*, p. 16.

<sup>46</sup> King, *Moriori*, p. 16.

<sup>47</sup> King, *Moriori*, p. 16.

<sup>48</sup> King also drew upon unpublished work by Richards and Head: Rhys Richards, 'An Historical Geography of Chatham Islands', University of Canterbury MA thesis (Canterbury, 1962) and Lyndsay Head, 'Friend Ritchie', unpublished manuscript (no date), *Moriori*, p. 215.

<sup>49</sup> King, *Moriori*, p. 20.

the Chatham Islands, such as its comparatively egalitarian social structure and practice of using non-lethal single combat to resolve conflict. He argued that whether or not the story of Nunuku's proscription of warfare was literally true, managing aggression by such means had ensured Moriori survival in the isolated island group.<sup>50</sup> This strategy and other aspects of Moriori culture, such as the simplicity of their technology, were not appreciated by nineteenth century European and Maori observers, who took them as indications of a primitive and cowardly people.

Thus was Moriori culture revealed and reviled when taken out of its own context and juxtaposed with the nineteenth-century world of imperial expansion, Maori and European colonisation, notions of racial and cultural superiority, industrial and scientific development.<sup>51</sup>

In the matter of nineteenth century cross-cultural judgments of Moriori culture, King also made it clear that his loyalties lay with Moriori.

The chapters that followed focused on European and Maori contact with Moriori, and the effects of changes wrought by the introduction of disease, of Moriori marginalisation forced by the islands' colonisation by both Europeans and Maori, and the ongoing slander of Moriori culture. King attributed an initial population decline among Moriori to exposure to diseases such as measles and influenza introduced by Europeans visiting the islands, and the slaughter of their food sources by sealers who came to use the islands as their base.<sup>52</sup> However, it was his estimation of the 1835 invasion's impact upon Moriori that drew much attention at the book's publication. Although King did emphasise the contribution of the 1870 Native Land Court ruling in favour of Maori claims to Chatham Islands land in further undermining Moriori, his account devoted far more attention on the events of 1835 and their repercussions for Moriori.<sup>53</sup>

In his description of the invasion by Te Ati Awa Maori, King provided a graphic account of the Moriori experience of their subjugation and enslavement by a people accustomed to warfare. This was tempered by an outline of the context in which members of Ngati

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<sup>50</sup> King, *Moriori*, pp. 26-28.

<sup>51</sup> King, *Moriori*, p. 38.

<sup>52</sup> King, *Moriori*, pp. 49-50.

<sup>53</sup> King, *Moriori*, pp. 123-35.

Tama and Ngati Mutunga, who had been forced south by Waikato iwi, decided to invade the island group.

At first they had fought to defend, then to survive in hostile territories, and then to secure footholds in new ones. By the 1830s, they sought to fight because combat among their warriors had become habitual; and as an antidote to their sense of dislocation. They were also nervous about what they regarded as the treachery of their Ngati Toa allies, under whose sufferance they had been allowed to drive out the Ngati Ira and occupy Port Nicholson.<sup>54</sup>

After learning that the Chatham Islands offered a prime site for crop cultivation and trade, and was held by a people who had no experience of warfare, Ngati Tama and Ngati Mutunga leaders decided to seize the first opportunity to take possession of the islands.<sup>55</sup>

Once he had established this context for invasion, King argued that while at this time the Moriori population suffered from the effects of European colonisation, they were “still in control of their lives.”<sup>56</sup> Measles and influenza epidemics had reduced their population by a quarter during the 1820s, leaving approximately 1600 people who were also threatened by the decimation of their food resources, but despite this they “spoke their own language, recited their own genealogies and traditions, and practised their own religion.”<sup>57</sup>

In summing up the impact of the 1835 invasion upon Moriori, King was careful to continue to contextualise Te Ati Awa’s actions, but his sympathies clearly lay with Moriori in this cultural confrontation.

The outcome was nothing more nor less than what had occurred on battlefields throughout the North Island in the two decades of tribal musket warfare. It was also nothing more nor less than Ngati Mutunga and Ngati Tama would have expected to eventuate had they themselves been defeated in combat. What was *different*, however, was that on the Chathams the adversaries were *not* Maori. The Moriori were subject to a different customary law, unacquainted with the conventions of Maori warfare and had not been exposed in recent decades to anything more brutal than individual hand-to-hand combat, which had ceased when blood was drawn. Moreover, the victims of harsher conflict had nowhere in the Chathams to which they could escape. For them, this sequel to the Maori invasion had all the unreality, all the physical and psychic horror, that it might have had for non-combatants dropped into the same circumstances in the late twentieth century.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> King, *Moriori*, p. 54.

<sup>55</sup> King, *Moriori*, pp. 55-56.

<sup>56</sup> King, *Moriori*, p. 56.

<sup>57</sup> King, *Moriori*, p. 57.

<sup>58</sup> King, *Moriori*, p. 66 (Emphasis in the original).

King's summary of the invasion brought its impact on Moriori into sharp relief, highlighting the gulf between contemporary Te Ati Awa Maori and Moriori experiences of violent conflict.

### ***Moriori Reviewed***

Although the publication of *Moriori* saw a number of very positive reviews, two critics of King's analysis of Te Ati Awa's role in the Moriori decline were concerned that his argument was emotive and inclined to give greater weighting to Moriori evidence than at times may have been justified. One review, by Canterbury Museum ethnologist Roger Fyfe, was highly critical of King's interpretation of the impact of the invasion and its aftermath upon Moriori society.<sup>59</sup> Fyfe argued that King had contributed two myths of his own regarding Moriori history.

The first was that Moriori had renounced lethal combat, which Fyfe believed was contradicted by the behaviour of Moriori men toward the *Chatham's* crew in 1791, and the debate held by Moriori in 1835 when it became clear that Ngati Mutunga and Ngati Tama's intentions were not peaceful. According to Fyfe, the aggression toward the sailors and deliberation over whether or not to attack the Te Ati Awa arrivals did not suggest that Moriori culture was inherently peaceable.<sup>60</sup> However, though King did support the argument that Moriori had eschewed warfare, he did not maintain there was no conflict whatsoever. Instead he followed Douglas Sutton's thesis that aggression was controlled by ritualised conflict between two individuals. He accepted that the incident at Kaingaroa Harbour was a breach of Nunuku's injunction against warfare, which was subsequently held to have been condemned by other Moriori. King maintained that there were occasionally breaches of the injunction, but that they occurred seldom and the perpetrators punished for the transgression.<sup>61</sup> But he did construe Moriori society as significantly more peaceable than early nineteenth century Maori society, and presented

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<sup>59</sup> Roger Fyfe, 'Review of *Moriori. A People Rediscovered*', *Archaeology in New Zealand*, 33, 1 (1990), pp. 52-54.

<sup>60</sup> Fyfe, p. 53.

<sup>61</sup> King, *Moriori*, pp. 26-28, 45, 51.

the invasion as a tragic clash of cultures that left surviving Moriori devastated by their experiences.

Fyfe argued that the second myth created by King was the decimation of the Moriori population by the actions of Te Ati Awa Maori on the Chathams. He questioned King's use of a list compiled by Moriori in 1862 that named all those who died during the invasion and in the years immediately afterward. According to Fyfe, the list of survivors included duplicated names and did not indicate genealogical ties. He also questioned its reliability given that the list was compiled years after the event.<sup>62</sup> Fyfe was not the only critic to be concerned by King's figures. Atholl Anderson, who reviewed *Moriori* for the *Otago Daily Times*, also questioned King's reliance on the list sent as part of a petition sent to Governor Grey and compiled almost 30 years after the invasion.<sup>63</sup> Anderson argued that it was unwise for King to regard the document as a census because it included duplication of names and offered no evidence of family relationships. The notion that 1200 people had died between 1835 and 1842 was to Anderson unlikely given that no "satisfactory" explanation was offered for this.<sup>64</sup>

In his text King had summarised the list's categories of deaths and reasons for those deaths according to its Moriori compilers.

This list revealed that 118 named men and 108 women had been killed directly [...] A subsequent note adds that these figures did not take into account "a considerable number of children whose names have been forgotten". This addition would support the Maori contention ... that "around 300" Moriori had been killed directly, approximately one-fifth to one-sixth of the population in 1835. [...] It also identifies 1,336 Moriori who subsequently died from "despair". Such were the bald statistics of the mass killings, which took place over months, well into 1836 (and individual Moriori slaves continued to be killed at the whim of their masters up to 1842).<sup>65</sup>

After describing post-invasion life for Moriori, "in which everything in which they had believed spiritually and culturally was shown to be leached of fertility and value", King offered his own explanation for the huge numbers of deaths. "It is little wonder that, in

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<sup>62</sup> Fyfe, p. 53.

<sup>63</sup> Atholl Anderson, 'Clearing the confusion of Moriori history', *Otago Daily Times*, 4 November 1989, p. 35.

<sup>64</sup> Anderson, p. 35.

<sup>65</sup> King, *Moriori*, p. 64.

the circumstances, Moriori continued to die: some for angering their owners by their listlessness; some from reduced immunity to disease...and some from 'konenge' – dispiritedness and despair."<sup>66</sup> This analysis risks undermining Moriori agency by suggesting that the invasion and its consequences constituted an almost fatal impact for Moriori, and is at odds with the main thrust of King's argument that Moriori were a resourceful people.

Anderson and Fyfe did not accept that almost 1700 hundred people had died between 1835 and 1842, nor that despair could cause so many of those deaths. However, King's estimate that the Moriori population numbered approximately 1600 in the early 1830s was based on Douglas Sutton's calculations and accepted by Ranginui Walker in his account of the 1835 invasion.<sup>67</sup> King quoted an estimate by a Wesleyan minister, the Reverend John Aldred, which gave an approximate population of 300 Moriori in 1842.<sup>68</sup> He then drew upon Bishop Selwyn, who during a visit to the Chatham Islands in 1848 found fewer survivors: "Their number at the time of my visit by careful census which I took of the names of men, women, and children, was 268".<sup>69</sup> Selwyn was sympathetic toward Moriori, and yet it is not likely he was motivated to fudge figures on their behalf. Therefore, it appears likely that approximately 1300 Moriori did die in the 13 years between the invasion and Bishop Selwyn's census. Whether or not King was right in accepting explanations from contemporary local Maori that at least some of the deaths

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<sup>66</sup> King, *Moriori*, p. 67.

<sup>67</sup> King, *Moriori*, p. 52; Sutton, 'A Culture History', p. 68; Ranginui Walker, *Ka Whawhai Tonu Matou. Struggle Without End*, revised ed. (Auckland, 2004), p. 41. Recently, Atholl Anderson has argued that the original calculation of a population of 2000 pre-contact is flawed given that this would put their numbers at a density 50 times higher than southern Maori in the same period: Atholl Anderson, 'Retrievable Time: prehistoric colonisation of South Polynesia from the outside in and the inside out', in *Disputed Histories. Imaging New Zealand's Pasts*, edited by Tony Ballantyne and Brian McLoughney (Dunedin, 2006), pp. 25-42, p. 27. Whether or not this argument influences other historians remains to be seen.

<sup>68</sup> King, *Moriori*, p. 92; Johannes Engst, the Moravian missionary from whose account of the invasion King quoted at length, estimated the post-invasion Moriori population at 150. See Bruno Weiss (ed.) *More than Fifty Years on Chatham Island*, translated by K. J. Dennison (Working Papers in Chatham Island Archaeology 2, 1975), p. 25.

<sup>69</sup> George Augustus Selwyn, *Church in the Colonies. No. XX. New Zealand. Part V. A Journal of the Bishop's Visitation Tour through his Diocese including a visit to the Chatham Islands in the year 1848* (London, 1849), p. 98; King, *Moriori*, p. 92.

occurred through what might be considered a near-fatal impact, it remains that a significant portion of the Moriori population died in this period.<sup>70</sup>

Atholl Anderson also questioned the tenor of Michael King's treatment of the events of the invasion: "Much of the drama, one might almost say melodrama, of the book depends on the proposition that a people who had deliberately renounced killing each other centuries before [...] were utterly doomed as sheep in the fold when bloodthirsty Maori came down on them in 1835."<sup>71</sup> Despite this reservation, however, Anderson praised King's text as a much-needed antidote to "racial prejudice and historical error".<sup>72</sup> As Anderson noted, King's analysis of relative culpability determined that the Native Land Court ruling in 1870 was the decisive factor in the Moriori decline, and not Te Ati Awa Maori's actions during and after the invasion.<sup>73</sup>

Other reviewers received *Moriori* with unreserved admiration. A review that appeared in the *NZ Listener* praised King for his efforts to debunk myths of mainland Moriori forced into exile, and offered an uncritical synopsis of King's analysis of Moriori history as a corrective.<sup>74</sup>

The pathetic figures who fuelled the Moriori myth invented by Percy Smith and Elsdon Best are seen to have been the dying and dispirited remnants of a once-proud and noble people, rich in their love for and knowledge of their island home. The Moriori lost their will to live through the loss of their tapu and the loss of their land. The land was confiscated by their Maori conquerors, and subsequent Moriori claims of mana whenua were dismissed by the Native Land Court, which upheld the Maori right of ownership by conquest.<sup>75</sup>

A review in the *Dominion Sunday Times* noted and yet accepted the tenor of King's account of Moriori history.

Michael King writes in the best kind of New Zealand plain-style: prose, unpretentious and yet moving, the pace and rhythm tempered to the drama of the tale, yet with a passion that flashes across the mere facts, illuminating many places that were purposefully, ignorantly or guiltily hidden. He neither moralises

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<sup>70</sup> Also see Rhys Richards, 'An Historical Geography of Chatham Islands', whose analysis supported the idea that despair contributed a significant number of deaths, pp. 50-55.

<sup>71</sup> Anderson, p. 35.

<sup>72</sup> Anderson, p. 35.

<sup>73</sup> Anderson, p. 35; King, *Moriori*, p. 132-133.

<sup>74</sup> Stuart Park, 'Myth, mana and misery', *NZ Listener*, 13 November 1989, p. 110.

<sup>75</sup> Park, p. 110.

nor condemns, but you are never left in any doubt: he leaves the judgments to us.<sup>76</sup> Both these reviews indicate a perception of Michael King as a skilled social historian whose analysis of events corrected an injustice to Moriori. Park contended that in their attempt to find “an historian of reputation and ability to tell their story to the world” they had succeeded in their choice.<sup>77</sup> Not only King’s words but also his reputation played a role in the reception of *Moriori*.

In his own review of the text, Maui Solomon summed up the response to *Moriori*, making it clear in the process that its commission had met a well-defined purpose for Moriori descendants.<sup>78</sup>

The original intention of the book was to produce something that would be accessible and appealing to the general public. This it has achieved admirably and the commercial success of the book can be measured by the fact that it has been in the top ten selling books in New Zealand for the past five months. There have been some reviewers of the purely academic persuasion who have found technical faults with the presentation of the facts and evidence but the book was never designed to satiate the appetite of academic pedants. Nor was it intended to present a definitive treatise on the origins or prehistory of the Moriori. Rather, it was designed for general consumption. Now, the next step is to have the book reproduced in condensed form for distribution throughout intermediate and secondary schools in New Zealand so that future generations are better informed than their parents were about the post-contact history of the Moriori.<sup>79</sup> Both Solomon and King made their intentions regarding the book as an educational tool clear from the outset.<sup>80</sup> Yet, despite King’s careful scholarship, audience interpretation of his text allowed the possibility that information in *Moriori* might be used in a way that King did not intend.

A review of *Moriori* by C. K. Stead illustrated the potential for readers to latch onto the invasion and its aftermath, without due consideration of other factors that contributed to the Moriori population’s decline. Published in *Metro* magazine, the review focused

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<sup>76</sup> James Ritchie, ‘A gift to the future’, *Dominion Sunday Times*, 12 November 1989, p. 17.

<sup>77</sup> Park, p. 110.

<sup>78</sup> Solomon, ‘Review’, p. 27.

<sup>79</sup> Solomon, ‘Review’, p. 27. A later indicator of the book’s success was it winning the Wattie Book of the Year Award in 1990.

<sup>80</sup> Solomon, ‘Forward’, p. 9; King, *Moriori*, p. 11.

largely on the invasion and enslavement of Moriori.<sup>81</sup> In his synopsis of post-contact history, Stead argued: “If, like other Polynesian cultures, they had been colonised by Europeans, it’s reasonable to suppose that they would have suffered serious damage and losses for a time, but that as a people they would have recovered and survived.”<sup>82</sup> He followed this with a summary of events in the mid-nineteenth century, concluding that Europeans on the island had been powerless to intervene.

Europeans pitied the Moriori and continued on good terms with them, but until 1863 there was no effective power on the island that could enforce repeated injunctions that the Maoris should release their slaves. When at last it was enforced, it was too late. Damage had been done on such a scale that as a people the Moriori would not recover.<sup>83</sup>

At this point Stead’s argument centred on the actions of Te Ati Awa Maori, to whom he attributed full responsibility for the near-extinction of the Moriori, but he then expanded his focus to include all Maori.

What is to be said for the Maori, whose method as colonisers was humiliation, slavery and genocide? King points out that death or enslavement is what they would have handed out to any defeated enemy; and what they would have expected if defeated. To say the least, it casts a grim light on the uncertainties of pre-European Maori life.<sup>84</sup>

He followed that statement by quoting King’s analogy between nineteenth century Moriori and late twentieth century New Zealanders.<sup>85</sup> Stead was the only reviewer at the time to centre his critique of *Moriori* on the actions of Maori in the Chatham Islands, but his approach demonstrated the potential for events in 1835 to be utilised in a late twentieth century political context.

## **The Politics of the Time**

Michael King was far from the first to debunk notions of Moriori as being the descendants of a pre-Maori population who had been driven from New Zealand by a superior Polynesian culture. While Maui Solomon and others heralded *Moriori* as a pioneering text that provided the antidote to decades of misinformation about Moriori history and culture, much of King’s argument was based on the work of others. King

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<sup>81</sup> C. K. Stead, ‘Polynesian Pacifists’, *Metro*, November 1989, pp. 194, 197.

<sup>82</sup> Stead, p. 194.

<sup>83</sup> Stead, p. 194.

<sup>84</sup> Stead, p. 197.

<sup>85</sup> Stead, p. 197.

himself acknowledged the importance of work by Alexander Shand, H. D. Skinner and Douglas Sutton, in particular, as well as that of other researchers such as David Simmons and Rhys Richards.<sup>86</sup> He also acknowledged that *Moriori* would not have been written without its commission by Moriori descendants, who had a pivotal role in the text's production.<sup>87</sup> *Moriori* reflected the efforts not only of King but also other researchers to counter the grip that Percy Smith and Elsdon Best's theories held on popular understandings of New Zealand history. The text's groundbreaking declaration of the continued Moriori survival came not from King's research but from the Moriori people themselves. However, King's reputation as a social historian appeared to be a key factor in the book's success.

A second determinant in ensuring the book received widespread attention was the timing of its publication. The findings of other significant texts on Moriori history, such as those by H. D. Skinner and Alexander Shand, had only reached an academic audience. As published works, they were in the public arena and yet appeared to languish disregarded on library shelves, while traces of the theories of Moriori history advanced by Percy Smith and Elsdon Best remained evident in debates on talkback radio and in letters to the editor. *Moriori* was published at a time when bicultural relations issues were regularly covered by the media. Its declaration that Moriori survived to the present brought a new dimension to ethnic relations in New Zealand and its focus on events surrounding the 1835 invasion provided potential ammunition for those Pakeha who opposed Maori political aspirations.

Throughout the twentieth century, an enduring myth among Pakeha held that as a society New Zealand enjoyed the foremost record of positive 'race' relations in the world. The exposure in the media of 'colour-bans' in Auckland pubs and a cinema challenged this view, as did an evaluation of the Department of Maori Affairs in 1961, the 'Hunn Report',

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<sup>86</sup> King, *Moriori*, pp. 11-12. See Shand, *The Moriori People*; Skinner, *Morioris of Chatham Islands*; Sutton, 'A Culture History'; Simmons, *The Great New Zealand Myth*; Richards, 'An Historical Geography of Chatham Islands'.

<sup>87</sup> King, *Moriori*, pp. 11-12.

which found that Maori suffered significant marginalisation.<sup>88</sup> The report argued that the best way to address this inequality was to intensify the integration of Maori into Pakeha society, a goal that reinforced the existing government policy of assimilation.<sup>89</sup> A subsequent change in law by the National government in 1967 allowed the Department of Maori Affairs to intervene in the administration of Maori-owned land, and alter the status of land held by four or fewer owners from 'Maori' to 'European'.<sup>90</sup> This triggered widespread resistance from Maori communities, and the campaign for land rights became a rallying point for disparate Maori political organisations.<sup>91</sup>

The campaign against land alienation continued in the 1970s, finding a measure of success with the Treaty of Waitangi Act 1975: passed by the Labour government in response to Te Hikoi ki Waitangi, a protest march from Waitangi to Wellington that attracted much media attention.<sup>92</sup> The 506-day occupation of Bastion Point by the Orakei Maori Action Committee brought the issue of land rights into New Zealanders' living rooms with television coverage of the protest, including the reading of the Riot Act and subsequent arrest of more than 200 people in May 1978.<sup>93</sup> In 1981, the campaign against a rugby tour by the Springboks also highlighted tensions in ethnic relations when Maori protesters challenged those Pakeha involved in the campaign to consider their complicity in racism in New Zealand.<sup>94</sup> Widespread media coverage of these protests meant that Pakeha could no longer claim a proud record of ethnic relations in their country without appearing disingenuous. While the increasing liberalisation in sectors of Pakeha society from the 1960s engendered sympathy among some Pakeha with Maori political aspirations, James Belich observes that other Pakeha responded to the upsurge of Maori political activism with anger, believing that claims of racism in New Zealand had been overstated for political gain.<sup>95</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> Harris, pp. 20-21.

<sup>89</sup> Ballara, p. 91; Harris, p. 21.

<sup>90</sup> Harris, p. 24.

<sup>91</sup> Walker, 'Maori People since 1950', p. 512.

<sup>92</sup> Walker, 'Maori People since 1950', p. 514.

<sup>93</sup> Walker, 'Maori People since 1950', p. 513; Mein Smith, p. 230.

<sup>94</sup> Poata-Smith, p. 105.

<sup>95</sup> Belich, *Paradise Reforged*, pp. 475, 479.

When *Moriori* was published in 1989, its narrative of a people unfairly treated by both Maori and Pakeha entered a political climate in which bicultural relations continued to make headlines. In 1985, an amendment to the Treaty of Waitangi Act allowed the Waitangi Tribunal to consider land claims retrospectively to 1840, which led to the lodgement of significant claims from Te Ati Awa, Ngai Tahu, and Tainui.<sup>96</sup> This caused anger and resentment among those Pakeha who believed that iwi had no right to compensation for events in the nineteenth century.<sup>97</sup> Increasing tension in bicultural relations also triggered resentment from Pakeha who felt challenged by assertions of Maori identity in the face of their own beliefs that ‘we are all New Zealanders’.<sup>98</sup> In this charged atmosphere of bicultural relations, where issues of ethnicity were often raised in the media, Michael King’s account of Moriori post-contact history afforded Moriori descendants the public platform from which to assert their claim to ethnic status as Moriori. However, events in the Chatham Islands during the mid-nineteenth century also offered those Pakeha so inclined an example of colonisation of an indigenous people by Maori. Highlighting the 1835 invasion of the Chathams by Te Ati Awa Maori at this time presented a new story of conquest by Maori to replace the old story of their annihilation of mainland Moriori. The emergence of the invasion as a potential replacement for Percy Smith and Elsdon Best’s mainland Moriori conquest, among some Pakeha, is examined in the next chapter.

Reasons for the both the tenacity of Smith and Best’s ideas and the success of *Moriori* in bringing an alternative analysis of Moriori history to public attention lie in the political climates in which they prospered. As this thesis has already argued, Smith and Best’s theories originally attracted public interest because they fitted within the Zeitgeist of early twentieth century Pakeha society, and were then transmitted through the education system as historical fact for decades. Michael King’s analysis of Moriori history and culture, which bore a contradictory message to that of Smith and Best, meshed with topical political concerns in the late 1980s. Together with his reputation as a social

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<sup>96</sup> Walker, ‘Maori People since 1950’, p. 516.

<sup>97</sup> Belich, p. 515.

<sup>98</sup> Paul Spoonley quoting comments reported in the media, ‘Pakeha Ethnicity: A Response to Maori Sovereignty’, in *Nga Take. Ethnic Relations and Racism in Aotearoa/New Zealand*, edited by Paul Spoonley, David Pearson and Cluny Macpherson (Palmerston North, 1991), pp. 154-70, p. 160.

historian, this was sufficient for *Moriori* to succeed in drawing attention to a refutation of Smith and Best's ideas, where others had failed for the lack of a similar conjuncture.

## 6. “History of a different kind”

### Introduction

Chapter Six examines two productions presented in the twentieth century’s closing years that built upon efforts made in the 1980s to counter Percy Smith and Elsdon Best’s legacy. The first production considered, a museum exhibit developed by members of the Moriori community and staff at Te Papa Tongarewa, presented a story of Moriori commitment to pacifism that spanned centuries. ‘The First Chatham Islanders’ triggered controversy – played out in the media – over its relegation of the 1835 invasion to a brief mention in a text panel. Chapter Six examines selected public reaction to this version of Moriori history, as well as responses to the criticism, made by Te Papa staff and the key Moriori representative for the exhibit, Maui Solomon. It considers possible influences on the exhibit’s handling of the invasion, including political tensions between Moriori and Ngati Mutunga during the 1990s. The chapter then examines a second work, which tells the story of Moriori contact first with Europeans and later with the Maori who colonised the island group. Unlike ‘The First Chatham Islanders’, the documentary *The Feathers of Peace* devoted half of its content to the 1835 invasion and efforts by Moriori survivors to later regain land lost to Ngati Mutunga and Ngati Tama. The chapter closes with a comparison of the two productions’ approach to relating stories of Moriori, and an assessment of their contribution to the history of ideas about Moriori.

### Representing Moriori

Aside from Sir Peter Buck’s critique of *The Lore of the Whare-wananga*, it was Pakeha who wrote texts that were critical to the development of this history of ideas prior to the 1990s. This tradition of relating stories of Moriori history from Pakeha perspectives was challenged firstly by Moriori descendants involved with Michael King’s 1989 text, and secondly by a collaboration between Te Papa staff and a group of Moriori descendants in the late 1990s. As a text that told the story of Moriori cultural history from a Moriori perspective, the museum exhibit, ‘The First Chatham Islanders’, represented a new

development in this history of ideas. For the first time members of the Moriori community portrayed themselves in a public context.

In 1995, staff at Te Papa had approached Moriori for their approval of a proposed ‘Mana Whenua’ exhibit on the Moriori people and for collaboration in the exhibit’s content. At a hui attended by Moriori representatives and Te Papa staff, Moriori were asked how they would like to be represented in the exhibition.<sup>1</sup> The result was a display of Moriori taonga that emphasised Moriori resourcefulness, picture boards telling stories of Moriori past and present, as well as text panels that described Nunuku’s injunction against warfare, which it referred to as “the covenant of peace”.<sup>2</sup> The taonga comprised examples of adzes, tree carvings, ceremonial clubs, planks from a whare, an atua figure, fish hooks, and a scaled model of a waka constructed from reeds. The photographic montage included colour pictures of contemporary Moriori as well as black and white images of Moriori born in the nineteenth century, such as Hirawanu Tapu and Tommy Solomon.

A letter to the editor of *The Evening Post* in January 1999 opened public debate over ‘The First Chatham Islanders’ exhibition. Dr Bridget Brooklyn, a New Zealand-born historian residing in Canberra, criticised the museum for providing text panels to exhibits that sometimes failed to respect “historical fact and context.”<sup>3</sup> In particular, Brooklyn disliked ‘The First Chatham Islanders’.

The use of the first person in the text panels was confusing as it made me wonder whether the story was being told from the point of view of the Moriori (no longer extant as a discrete people) or modern Chatham Islanders. Worse was the utter failure of the exhibit to convey why the Moriori no longer exist – that is, the Maori massacre of 1835.

Having worked much of the past 10 years with collecting institutions [...] I am familiar with the view that cultural sensitivity should at all times take precedence over facts that may be distasteful to visitors. I know that public history can be tricky.

Nevertheless, my experience of the above exhibit reminded me of the abuse of history in postwar Japan or the Soviet Union.

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<sup>1</sup> ‘Mana Whenua Hui with Moriori Iwi’, 5 December 1995, Te Papa Tongarewa, Museum of New Zealand Archives, MT/1031, MA 70-11-M01 49309.

<sup>2</sup> The exhibit remains on permanent display as part of the ‘Mana Whenua’ exhibition at Te Papa.

<sup>3</sup> Bridget Brooklyn, ‘Tenor Of Some Of Te Papa Disliked’, *The Evening Post*, 30 January 1999, p. 4.

Museums are not exempt from the duty to represent the past without knowingly suppressing relevant facts to fulfil some misguided non-historical agenda.<sup>4</sup> This criticism of the exhibit's lack of emphasis on the 1835 invasion triggered a public debate that continued through 1999 and into 2000.

Two weeks after publication of Brooklyn's letter, *The Evening Post* published responses from Te Papa and Maui Solomon, who represented Te Iwi Moriori Trust Board. The general manager of research and development, Ken Gorbey, answered Brooklyn's concerns over 'The First Chatham Islanders'.

[S]he worries at the use of the first person in the Moriori section as, she explains, "Moriori no longer exist" or, at the least, are "no longer extant as a discrete people". It was in partnership with the Moriori that Te Papa developed this exhibition. Its theme, developed with the descendants of people who've survived great loss in their history, was that they were a people alive – existing, flourishing. Contentions of extinction are an historical untruth.<sup>5</sup>

A second letter, by Maui Solomon, presented the response of those Moriori who collaborated on the project.

This letter is to express the gross irritation of Moriori at Dr Brooklyn's incredible ignorance. As a professional historian, she should ensure that she had her facts straight before expressing them publicly.

The facts are that Te Iwi Moriori Trust Board worked very closely with Te Papa in conceptualising, designing and putting in place the Moriori exhibition. It was a truly worthwhile and empowering exercise. We are extremely proud of the exhibition and honoured to be a part of the success of Te Papa. It was also a welcome relief to work with enlightened and visionary people at Te Papa.

The fact that there is no reference to the 1835 massacre reflects the fact that Moriori do not wish to dwell in the past but are looking towards the future and, in particular, the renewal of our ancient covenant of peace at the dawn of the new millennium. We are interested in focusing on the positive side of our culture.

The killings did happen but we are still here, to celebrate the legacy of peace left to us by our ancestors. We are creating history of a different kind. That should please, not irritate, Dr Brooklyn.<sup>6</sup>

These responses drew criticism in a letter to the editor that questioned Maui Solomon's right to speak for "those 300 hundred or so people who were butchered, and the many who were enslaved in 1835, and entitles him to hide important facts from the young audiences of today."<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Brooklyn, p. 4.

<sup>5</sup> Ken Gorbey, 'Te Papa Responds', *The Evening Post*, 17 February 1999, p. 4.

<sup>6</sup> Maui Solomon, 'Gross Irritation', *The Evening Post*, 17 February 1999, p. 4.

<sup>7</sup> Anne Munz, 'Truth of Chathams Massacre Hidden', *The Evening Post*, 1 March 1999, p. 4.

Ken Gorbey and Maui Solomon's response to Bridget Brooklyn also sparked criticism from four historians – Miles Fairburn, David Hamer, Peter Munz, and W. H. Oliver – who expressed their concerns in a letter to Te Papa's chief executive, Dame Cheryl Sotheran.<sup>8</sup> Peter Munz subsequently wrote an article that outlined their complaint together with Te Papa's response, and expanded on what he saw as the museum's responsibility to represent past events accurately.<sup>9</sup> In his initial criticism of the exhibit, Munz argued that, "there is no mention of the Maori invasion and the massacre that by any reckoning was the event that fundamentally determined the social composition of the Chathams."<sup>10</sup> One text panel did refer to an invasion: "Long ago, Moriori chiefs laid down a covenant of peace, prohibiting the killing of people. On distant Rekohu, pounded by turbulent seas, we have held steadfast through invasion and disaster, and today we share our story."<sup>11</sup> It also made another oblique reference to the invasion and slavery: "This covenant has been a beacon of hope and strength, guiding our people through 200 hundred years of despair, into the dawn of a new millennium, a new beginning."<sup>12</sup> However, for Munz this failed to convey the importance of events in the Chatham Islands during the mid-nineteenth century.

The reaction by those involved with the exhibit's development to Bridget Brooklyn's criticism of the information conveyed in the panels motivated Peter Munz, Miles Fairburn, David Hamer, and W. H. Oliver to make a formal complaint. In his article Munz contended that the museum ought to have offered an apology and assurances that "this gross historical misrepresentation would be rectified", rather than assert that no

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<sup>8</sup> Nick Barnett, 'The Invasion Evasion', *The Dominion*, 1 November 1999, p. 11.

I have been unable to locate a copy of this letter: Professor Fairburn no longer has a copy, and a Te Papa's archive staff member was unable to find their copy when I visited the archive. Nor was the archive staff member able to locate their copy of Sir Ron Trotter's reply to the historians, or their tape of an interview of Ken Gorbey and Maui Solomon by Paul Holmes in March 1999. (Staffing changes meant that only a temp. was available to help me during my visit.)

<sup>9</sup> Peter Munz, 'Te Papa and the Problem of Historical Truth', *History Now*, 6, 1 (2000), pp. 13-16.

<sup>10</sup> Munz, p. 13.

<sup>11</sup> Text panel, 'The First Chatham Islanders', Te Papa Tongarewa, Museum of New Zealand.

<sup>12</sup> Text panel, 'The First Chatham Islanders', Te Papa Tongarewa, Museum of New Zealand.

error had been made.<sup>13</sup> In Munz's opinion, Gorbey and Solomon's responses indicated that the museum deliberately withheld the truth.

The public was thus informed that it was Te Papa policy, at least on this occasion, to hide the truth about the unsavoury customs of Maori even though in this instance these customs had amounted to nothing less than genocide and cannibalism.<sup>14</sup>

Munz made it clear that he considered the exhibit to be a breach of "standards of truthfulness" that the country's national museum ought to uphold in its role as an educational institution.<sup>15</sup> The issue of representing history 'truthfully' had been central to the complaint made by the four historians to Dame Cheryl Sotheran.

They drew attention to the fact that, in this case, the Museum's standards of research were inadequate because the exhibit displaying the life and culture of the first Chatham Islanders distorts the truth by omitting all mention of the 1835 massacre of these islanders by invading Maori tribes – an early instance of ethnic cleansing. The exhibit does point out that these people had traditionally committed themselves to keeping peace with each other, and had renounced violence, but it does not go on to note that this commitment was exploited by the Maori who massacred them. They urged that the relevance of the 1835 massacre to contemporary affairs in the Balkans and in Rwanda was painfully obvious.<sup>16</sup>

Neither Munz nor the other historians were satisfied with the reply to their letter from Sir Ron Trotter, chairperson of the Board at the time, who responded on behalf of Dame Cheryl.<sup>17</sup> Trotter apparently defended Te Papa's position on the exhibit by explaining that the Moriori involved in its development chose not to present themselves as victims.<sup>18</sup> In his article, Munz took exception to the idea that Moriori had the right to portray their history as they deemed appropriate even if it contradicted conventions of historical scholarship. He also argued modern Moriori did not have the right to speak for victims of the 1835 invasion.<sup>19</sup> Munz concluded his argument by contending that, in their depiction of Moriori history, Te Papa staff had chosen a "politically correct" view of the past, rejecting historical accuracy in the process.<sup>20</sup> Munz believed the exhibit was indicative of

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<sup>13</sup> Munz, p. 13.

<sup>14</sup> Munz, p. 13.

<sup>15</sup> Munz, p. 13.

<sup>16</sup> Munz, p. 13.

<sup>17</sup> Munz, pp. 13-14.

<sup>18</sup> Munz, p. 13.

<sup>19</sup> Munz, p. 14.

<sup>20</sup> Munz, p. 16.

an unfortunate trend among some New Zealand academics in allowing Maori perspectives on the past equal status with historical scholarship.<sup>21</sup>

In November 1999, a newspaper article outlined the debate, canvassing opinions from two of the historians, along with Dame Cheryl Sotheran, Maui Solomon, and Michael King.<sup>22</sup> Dame Cheryl denied accusations of political correctness in the exhibit's veiled references to the invasion, and asserted the right of Moriori to "elaborate their history in a way that's acceptable to them".<sup>23</sup> However, Peter Munz and Miles Fairburn argued that no single group owned a particular history, and that rigorous historical analysis of the past was required to challenge potential distortions in understanding those events. Munz's assertion that it was "a bit arrogant of modern Moriori" to speak for "victims of the 1835 massacre" appeared to anger Solomon.<sup>24</sup>

Mr Solomon sends a challenge back to academic historians. For decades, he says, sloppy assumptions about Moriori origins and unflattering stereotypes have circulated as the "truth" about Morioris.

"These academics should look in the mirror and ask themselves, why has the education system screwed up the history of Moriori?" Mr Solomon says.

False statements about Moriori history and a triumphal over-emphasis on the Maori invasion are enlisted to "beat up Maori", he says.<sup>25</sup>

Concern over possible breaches of scholarly standards on the one side, and resentment of scholarly representations of Moriori history and culture on the other, meant that the debate was polarised to a degree that did not appear to allow compromise from either side.

## Shifting Focus

Given that in 1987 Moriori descendants had been eager to depict their people's post-contact experiences, including detailed coverage of the invasion and their slavery, in a history intended for general readership, Solomon's position in 1999 indicated a shift in attitude toward publicising certain events in the past. Indeed, although Michael King accepted the right of Moriori to govern the exhibit's content, he was surprised it made little mention to the invasion.

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<sup>21</sup> Munz, p. 16.

<sup>22</sup> Barnett, p. 11.

<sup>23</sup> Barnett, p. 11.

<sup>24</sup> Barnett, p. 11.

<sup>25</sup> Barnett, p. 11.

“As an historian, though, I find it odd that more substantial reference was not made to the 1835 invasion, because that episode conditioned what Moriori culture became in the 20<sup>th</sup> century,” King says. “To leave it out is rather like trying to explain East Timorese history and culture without reference to the Indonesian invasion.”<sup>26</sup>

The key to understanding this apparent shift in approach to the events in mid-nineteenth century Chatham Islands may lie in Solomon’s belief that the invasion was used to “beat up Maori”. Although he did not directly accuse the four historians of racism in their concerns over the exhibit’s oblique references to the invasion, Solomon may have observed this use of the past by others. And in 2000, debate sparked by a politician’s comments at a psychologists’ conference yielded a handful of examples that appeared to use the 1835 invasion used as supporting evidence in accusations levelled against Maori.

In a speech to psychologists in August 2000, then Labour minister Tariana Turia contended that post traumatic stress disorder induced by “the holocaust suffered by indigenous people including Maori as a result of colonial contact and behaviour” had not received sufficient attention.<sup>27</sup> This statement resulted in a stream of letters to editors, some of which mentioned the 1835 invasion by Te Ati Awa Maori.

Tariana Turia is suffering from “post-colonial traumatic stress disorder”. How sad, but then I wonder how the Moriori feel.

Oh, that’s right there are none left because the Maori invaded/colonised their homelands and ate them all...

Maybe Mrs Turia should think herself lucky the pakeha were the colonists and not a neighbouring Maori tribe.<sup>28</sup>

Perhaps Tariana Turia has been receiving the wrong message. Instead of colonisation creating a holocaust-type situation and post-colonial trauma syndrome, maybe the killing and exploitation of the Moriori, coupled with invading attacks on neighbouring tribes, has created a guilt complex for previous actions by tribal marauders.<sup>29</sup>

Might I remind Minister Turia that home invasion and something similar to the Holocaust took place long before colonisation by the Europeans. I suggest she speaks to descendants of the Ngai Tahu, living between Rangiora and Akaroa or the Moriori in the Chathams, if she can find any. I am sure that survivors of these

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<sup>26</sup> Barnett, p. 11.

<sup>27</sup> Astrid Smeele, ‘PM Expected To Give Turia Ticking Off Over “Off Planet” Speech’, *New Zealand Press Association*, 29 August 2000 (no page number).

<sup>28</sup> Jeff Grove, ‘What About The Moriori?’, *The Evening Post*, 1 September 2000, p. 4.

<sup>29</sup> B. M. Mackay, ‘Has Turia Mixed Up Feelings Of Guilt?’, *The Daily News*, 2 September 2000, p. 9.

tribes would certainly have suffered from post-traumatic stress disorder, especially as at this time cannibalism and slavery were practised.<sup>30</sup>

The only holocaust that happened in New Zealand was carried out by Maoris against the peaceful Moriori people, who were slaughtered and eaten in their thousands. Today, like the moa and the huia bird, the Morioris are almost extinct. [...] The pain and suffering of Maoris pales in contrast to what the Morioris have endured at the hands of the Maoris. It is high time that the Maoris go back a little in their dark history and make amends to the race they almost obliterated. What is known of the Morioris seems to be conveniently omitted from libraries and the museums, etc, all of which peddle the Maori cause.

If the British had dealt with the Maoris in the same way as the Maoris dealt with the Morioris, there would not have been sufficient Maoris to sign a Treaty of Waitangi.<sup>31</sup>

Holocaust: a dreadful word for an inexplicable act. The closest we have come to it during New Zealand's known history was the deliberate extinction by Maoris of the peaceful Moriori race through warfare, cannibalism and slavery.<sup>32</sup>

These correspondents may have been motivated by a sincere wish to remind Turia that the boundary between the oppressed and the oppressors may have been blurred historically in New Zealand. Yet in another reading, these letters may indicate that at least a handful of Pakeha publicly used the 1835 invasion as a justification for denying Maori the right to claim their people have suffered enduring negative consequences of British colonisation. In this reading, the 1835 invasion of the Chatham Islands by Te Ati Awa Maori has become a replacement script for earlier claims that Maori had no rights to restitution of land because they in turn had conquered mainland Moriori. Whether or not these writers used the 1835 invasion to "beat up" Maori is a matter of interpretation, but their letters may provide an example for Maui Solomon's assertion that interest among some Pakeha in the invasion was motivated by more than curiosity about Moriori history.<sup>33</sup>

If concern over possible negative consequences for Maori in highlighting the 1835 invasion provided one reason for an apparent downplaying of the invasion, a second factor may have been a reluctance to create greater tension in relations between Moriori

<sup>30</sup> Stratton Yelverton, 'Colonial Stress', *The Christchurch Press*, 2 September 2000, p. 10.

<sup>31</sup> R. A. Baikie, 'Returning To The Past', *The Dominion*, 20 September 2000, p. 12.

<sup>32</sup> Alex Gillett, 'First Stone', *The Dominion*, 21 September 2000, p. 10.

<sup>33</sup> Barnett, p. 11.

and Chatham Islands Maori. Moriori kaumatua, Wilford Davis, wrote to Sir Ron Trotter in December 1999 to express his extreme dismay at the exhibit's handling of the invasion.<sup>34</sup> He claimed that the decision to downplay it was not made by a “truly representative number of Moriori descendants, including some of the Elders.”<sup>35</sup> Instead he asked for “suitably restrained mention” of the invasion to be added to the text panels. He also enclosed a letter to the editor of *The Dominion* that he had submitted in November but which had not been published. In this second letter Davis suggested that shared ancestry between most Moriori and Maori may have “firmly influenced” the decision to omit clear reference to the invasion.<sup>36</sup> He also observed that claimants' wishes at the Waitangi Tribunal hearings did not accord with claims that Moriori no longer wished to be seen as victims.<sup>37</sup> Davis had also told Michael King that he believed the decision to emphasise the positive aspects of Moriori history represented a compromise made in the interests of both Moriori fisheries claims and in shared Moriori-Maori ancestry among some descendants.<sup>38</sup>

When Moriori descendants had decided to assert, through King's book *Moriori*, their continued existence as a people, their intentions were opposed by one Moriori Chatham Islander. Riwai Reece argued that drawing attention to events in the Chathams during the mid-nineteenth century risked increasing current tensions between Moriori and Chatham Islands Maori.<sup>39</sup> The first public signs of conflict emerged in 1987, when Moriori and Ngati Mutunga had “sharp differences” over speaking rights at what was then the only marae on Chatham Island, Whakamaharatanga Marae.<sup>40</sup> Some Ngati Mutunga also questioned the legitimacy of assertions of the continued existence of Moriori as a people. Subsequently, the Runanga o Wharekauri Rekohu was formed, claiming to speak for all Chatham Islands Maori and Moriori. Yet Wilford Davis had claimed that Moriori

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<sup>34</sup> H. Wilford Davis, letter to Sir Ron Trotter, 13 December 1999, Te Papa Tongarewa Museum of New Zealand Archive, MT/1031 MA7011 M01 007100.

<sup>35</sup> Davis, ‘Letter to Sir Ron’.

<sup>36</sup> H. Wilford Davis, letter to the editor of *The Dominion*, 20 November 1999, Te Papa Tongarewa Museum of New Zealand Archive, MT/1031 MA7011 M01 007100.

<sup>37</sup> Davis, ‘Letter to the editor’.

<sup>38</sup> King, *Tread Softly*, p. 132.

<sup>39</sup> King, *Tread Softly*, p. 142.

<sup>40</sup> *Rekohu*, p. 17.

membership depended on having not only Moriori but also Chatham Islands Maori descent. In 1988, the Tchakat Henu Association formed, creating an alternative for Moriori to membership in the runanga. Four years later, a second group representing Moriori, Te Iwi Moriori Trust Board formed, and together with the association and the runanga competed in claims to land and fisheries in the Chatham Islands. Political division on Chatham Island resulted in heightened tensions between Maori and Moriori even before *Moriori*'s publication.<sup>41</sup>

Maui Solomon, who on behalf of Moriori lodged a claim to Chatham Islands' fisheries with the Waitangi Tribunal in 1988, later argued that Moriori wanted Maori and Pakeha claims to the resources settled fairly along with their own.

Moriori have been lobbying Government for the past three years to have the fisheries administered on a racial-friendly basis in the Island. Everyone would participate and Pakeha (who pre-dated Taranaki arrival by 44 years) *would not* be excluded. In the final analysis, the Island is a small and closely knit community so that to split up a resource fundamental to the Island's future economic prosperity would only entrench the racial divisions which have evolved in recent times.<sup>42</sup> However, by the time that the claims went to a hearing in 1994, tensions over the multi-million dollar fisheries had escalated. Although an amendment to the Treaty of Waitangi Act meant that fisheries claims were no longer in the Waitangi Tribunal's jurisdiction by this time, the Tribunal's ruling on the relative relationships of Moriori and Maori to the land in question could potentially influence the fisheries settlement.<sup>43</sup> Tensions between Maori and Moriori over rights to Chatham Islands' fisheries during the 1990s were publicised in newspaper coverage of the debate.<sup>44</sup> Michael Belgrave argues that the Tribunal hearings themselves eroded what goodwill remained between the competing claimants because the process was "highly adversarial" and "pitted Maori and Moriori against each other".<sup>45</sup> Under these circumstances, Moriori efforts to assert the validity of their claim to ethnic status as Moriori continued to be challenged by some Ngati Mutunga,

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<sup>41</sup> *Rekohu*, p. 17.

<sup>42</sup> Solomon, 'Review', p. 27

<sup>43</sup> Michael Belgrave, *Historical Frictions. Maori Claims and Reinvented Histories* (Auckland, 2005), pp. 285-86.

<sup>44</sup> For example: 'Moriori challenge fisheries deal', *New Zealand Herald*, 30 September, 1992, p. 3; 'Moriori Dispute Fishing Quota', *The Evening Post*, 7 October 1996, p. 11; 'Moriori Win First Round Of Fish Fight', *The Evening Post*, 12 October 1996, p. 7.

<sup>45</sup> Belgrave, p. 303.

and the Moriori cultural revival was overshadowed by a battle for future rights to the wealth of fisheries in Chatham Islands' waters.<sup>46</sup> While the Tribunal found that Ngati Mutunga were due compensation for land loss, it concluded that the "main relief by far is due to the Moriori people."<sup>47</sup>

Certainly, strain caused by the battle for rights to Chatham Islands' fisheries may have made other Moriori reluctant to potentially antagonise Maori over the contents of a museum exhibit, though there was no record of a deliberate decision to downplay the 1835 invasion in documents stored in the file devoted to the exhibit at the museum's archive.<sup>48</sup> In correspondence with the exhibit's project leader, Arapata Hakiwai, Maui Solomon stated that: "final approval is to be given by the people I represent. So far there has been widespread support for the concept and the exhibition."<sup>49</sup> Solomon represented those descendants who were members of Te Iwi Moriori Trust Board, to which not all Moriori belonged.<sup>50</sup> Yet, support for the exhibit, which emphasised what was positive in Moriori history, did represent a shift in focus from the commission of *Moriori* by Michael King. It may have been influenced by existing tension between Moriori and Chatham Island Maori, by the possibility that some Pakeha might use the invasion and slavery by some Te Ati Awa Maori to condemn all Maori, or by consideration of shared ancestry many Moriori descendants held with Maori. This shift may also have been influenced by reluctance to be continually viewed as victims because of events that occurred in the nineteenth century. The politically charged nature of contemporary relations between Moriori and Maori, Pakeha and Maori, and even perhaps within the Moriori community, generated debate over an exhibit that may itself been shaped in part by tensions in ethnic relations at the time.

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<sup>46</sup> *Rekohu*, p. 18; Belgrave, p. 303.

<sup>47</sup> *Rekohu*, p. 285, 286.

<sup>48</sup> Given that I was not able to see all the documents related to the exhibit that I had been told were in the archive, this cannot be considered conclusive evidence.

<sup>49</sup> Maui Solomon, letter to Arapata Hakiwai, 27 February 1996, Te Papa Tongarewa Museum of New Zealand Archive, MT/1031 MA7011 M01 49309.

<sup>50</sup> Barnett, p. 11; *Rekohu*, p. 17.

## A Revised *Moriori*

In the final year of the century, Michael King published a revised edition of his book, *Moriori*. New material was included in the final chapter, where King described the discovery by Wilford Davis of papers belonging to Moriori kaumatua, and the opening of the 1994 Waitangi Tribunal hearing at Te Awapatiki peninsula on Chatham Island.<sup>51</sup> He also stated that the book itself was “another factor that gave momentum to the renaissance of Moriori culture and identity.”<sup>52</sup> As Maui Solomon had observed in his review of the first edition, the book succeeded in drawing New Zealanders’ attention to Moriori post-contact history, and to research that contradicted the theories of Moriori history and culture which originated with Percy Smith and Elsdon Best.<sup>53</sup> *Rekohu*, the Waitangi Tribunal report on the Chatham Islands’ claims also acknowledges the book’s role: “Moriori were firmly placed on the New Zealand stage with the publication of Michael King compendious history, *Moriori*.”<sup>54</sup>

Yet one danger in drawing attention to nineteenth century Moriori history was the potential for those Pakeha so inclined to latch on to the 1835 invasion and Moriori slavery as a means of condemning all Maori for the actions of a few. Although the revised edition did not attract the fanfare attracted by the original publication, one review of the revised edition did comment on the invasion’s potential for controversy, in a manner that made the reviewer’s position clear.<sup>55</sup>

Michael King’s *Moriori* won widespread and deserved acclaim when it was first published in 1989.

It filled in many of the gaps and debunked several myths of these peace-loving people of the Chathams. And yet King’s very success in exposing Moriori history and tradition to the world had its downside.

His vivid account of the Maori invasion of the Chathams in 1835 and the human suffering that followed – far more horrific than anything in the Anglo-Maori Land Wars – shattered the politically correct view that only Europeans could do harm to indigenous peoples.

The 900 Taranaki Maori colonists initially ignored Moriori when they encountered them, walking through their lands and settlement without warning,

<sup>51</sup> Michael King, *Moriori*, revised ed., pp. 191-93.

<sup>52</sup> King, *Moriori*, revised ed., p. 191.

<sup>53</sup> Solomon, ‘Review’, p. 27.

<sup>54</sup> *Rekohu*, p. 17.

<sup>55</sup> Graeme Hunt, ‘Debunking myths of gentle Moriori’, *National Business Review*, 2 February 2001, p. 38.

permission or greeting. Moriori were initially slow to react – they did not share the same warrior culture as Maori – but when they did they were slain by the colonists without too much thought.

No one knows exactly how many died – at least 226 directly and more than 1300 later from “despair”. Whatever the exact death toll, it amounted to genocide given there were probably never more than 2000 Moriori on the Chathams in pre-European times. Those who survived the initial slaughter were locked into slavery. It was a shameful episode and one conveniently forgotten in modern New Zealand when Maori behaviour is sanitised and European colonisation vilified.<sup>56</sup>

The reviewer at once identified the risk in highlighting the invasion and its aftermath, and through his slant on those events gave an example of its use to “beat up Maori”.

In drawing attention to the painful events of the mid-nineteenth century, Michael King’s account only reiterated what was a matter of public record. Arguably, without the publication of *Moriori* the events may not have ever attracted the interest generated by King’s work. King believed that the invasion and slavery of Moriori “confirmed the nature and ethos of Moriori culture and conditioned decisively what Moriori became in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.”<sup>57</sup> Yet, for at least a few of his readers, the peaceable nature of Moriori society may have served as a sharp contrast to what they saw as Maori brutality. King and the Moriori descendants who commissioned the book wanted the story of Moriori post-contact history to be told, but they could not control how that history would be received or what use might be made of it in the public domain. An apparent reluctance to highlight all aspects of nineteenth century Moriori history in the Te Papa exhibit may have been motivated by fear of possible responses by some Pakeha to learning of the 1835 invasion.

### ***The Feathers of Peace***

The publication of a new edition of *Moriori* coincided with the screening of a documentary on the early post-contact Moriori history, *The Feathers of Peace*.<sup>58</sup> Ngati Apa film-maker Barry Barclay, who had made the film *Ngati* earlier in his career, wrote and directed the documentary. Barclay began writing a screenplay for the documentary in

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<sup>56</sup> Hunt, p. 38. The only other review found did not refer to the invasion explicitly: Jim Hunter, ‘Straightening Up Moriori History’, *The Southland Times*, 18 May 2002, p. 39.

<sup>57</sup> King, *Tread Softly*, p. 133: a comment made in the context of the Te Papa exhibit.

<sup>58</sup> Matthews, p. 27.

1993, after reading *Moriori*, but it was not until 1998 that he found sufficient investors to back his project.<sup>59</sup> Until reading King's text, the film-maker had known little of the Moriori, except the notion that Maori had driven Moriori from mainland New Zealand: "I was astonished at the story. The next bolt out of the blue was 'this must be turned into a film.'"<sup>60</sup> The documentary was filmed in early 2000 then screened as part of that year's International Film Festival; interest in *The Feathers of Peace* was such that it was later given a wider release and also screened on television.<sup>61</sup>

The documentary was divided into four parts covering initial contact between Moriori and Europeans, early European settlement on the Chathams, the invasion by Te Ati Awa Maori, and the Native Land Court hearings.<sup>62</sup> Each section featured 'interviews' with actors playing key figures in that period, with their responses garnered from primary source documents such as letters, diaries, and court testimony where possible. In an interview Barclay explained that he wanted "participants to tell their own stories".<sup>63</sup>

"It came about by thinking 'Why don't we interview them?' That decision came out of the blue. Having made that decision, how to actually work it out in practice was something that took a long time, to divide up the material [...] Most of the work on the script addressed those questions, balancing the past and the characters I would use with what they could and would say in a situation, what sort of reactions people have when they're being interviewed."<sup>64</sup>

For example, in the first part, 'The Running Man', Lieutenant Broughton was grilled by an unseen interviewer for his men's role in the death of Moriori, Tamakaroro. This scene was complemented by an 'interview' with a nameless Moriori man, who explained Nunuku's injunction against warfare in Moriori, with English subtitles.<sup>65</sup> Such a device gave the impression of immediacy and fostered audience empathy with historical figures, though it also risked giving the impression that dialogue not lifted from primary sources, such as the 'interview' with the Moriori man, was based on actual records.

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<sup>59</sup> Mike Houlahan, 'Film Puts Spotlight On Chathams' Bloody History', *New Zealand Press Association*, 3 July 2000 (no page number).

<sup>60</sup> Tom Cardy, 'Moriori Story Brought To Life', *The Evening Post*, 19 July 2000, p. 18.

<sup>61</sup> Matthews, p. 27.

<sup>62</sup> *The Feathers of Peace*.

<sup>63</sup> Houlahan, no page number available.

<sup>64</sup> Houlahan.

<sup>65</sup> *The Feathers of Peace*.

The second part, 'A Time for Planting', reinforced the theme of a peaceable Moriori culture in contact with a more aggressive, European culture developed in the first part. The unseen interviewer questioned European settlers, and Moriori attempting to survive measles and influenza epidemics in the Chatham Islands. 'A Purchase of Horses', the third section in the narrative, depicted the invasion of the islands and slavery of Moriori by Te Ati Awa Maori. The 'interviews' with members of Ngati Tama and Ngati Mutunga conveyed the context of their decision to invade the Chathams, outlining their displacement from Taranaki and uncertain occupancy of Port Nicholson. Tensions between the two iwi were also underlined. Having already emphasised Moriori culture's rejection of warfare, the documentary presented handheld camera 'footage' of the invasion and killing of Moriori by the Taranaki Maori. An 'interview' with missionary Johannes Engst and repeated graphic images of Moriori women, children, and men being killed with a single blow to the head from a patu highlighted the violence faced by a people who had renounced warfare. The documentary's last section, 'A Balance of Justice', dealt with the Native Land Court hearings in 1870, and offered courtroom 'footage' of evidence given by Hirawanu Tapu in defence of Moriori claims for recognition of their rights to land in the Chatham Islands. It emphasised the Court's culpability in undermining the recovery of the Moriori after their release from slavery.<sup>66</sup>

Images of bleached skulls in sand dunes being uncovered by the wind, shown in the film's third part, recalled examples of atrocities in Europe, Africa, and South-east Asia in the late twentieth century. One review of the film compared these images to television news footage of evidence of mass killings instigated by Pol Pot in Cambodia.<sup>67</sup> Another journalist linked the decimation of the Moriori population to acts of genocide: "as tales unfolded in the past decade of horrific killings in the Balkans and Africa, it put New Zealand's very own episode of 'ethnic cleansing' in a whole new light."<sup>68</sup> However, in interviews with the media, Barclay himself did not label the actions of Ngati Tama and Ngati Mutunga during the invasion and afterward as genocide. Nor did he attribute blame for the near extinction of the Moriori people to a single group.

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<sup>66</sup> *The Feathers of Peace*.

<sup>67</sup> Cardy, p. 18.

<sup>68</sup> Houlahan.

“It would be simple if it was just government. It would be simple if it was just the court. But maybe it’s much more profound than that. Maybe it is our nature. Maybe it’s our culture. I don’t think we can easily separate the human being and the beast and culture.”<sup>69</sup>

Michael King praised the complexity of Barclay’s portrayal of events: “It’s not an easy, simplified representation of villains and heroes.”<sup>70</sup> However, through his emphasis on the peaceable nature of Moriori culture in contrast with Maori and European cultural norms of the time, Barclay made it clear that he considered the Moriori response to aggression from both groups of colonists to be heroic. The images of skulls in the sand dunes underlined the cost of that response.

The scenes of violence presented in *The Feathers of Peace*’s portrayal of the 1835 invasion were in sharp contrast to the oblique references to the invasion made in ‘The First Chatham Islanders’ exhibit. Barry Barclay’s documentary did not evade the issues raised by the actions of Maori colonists on the Chathams or the Native Land Court ruling. When asked for his opinion on the events, “Barclay said he had passionate views on what happened and for New Zealanders to know, but people will make up their own minds.”<sup>71</sup> The film-maker added that: “It’s for other people to untangle. People will see what they want or need to see. That’s how I’d like to see the film viewed.”<sup>72</sup> This approach to the contentious nature of events portrayed in his documentary implied that Barclay may have trusted his audience more than those who developed the exhibit had done, or else perhaps that he accepted he could not control his audience’s interpretations of events. For Barclay, the timing was also right for an examination of the subject.

“Maybe the time has called for the story, and the sort of base rock issues that surface in the film, to be told,” Barclay says.

“We are in a period where we as a people want to wrestle them, or be intrigued by them.”

“We’ve seen a lot of that on TV, we’ve seen it in Kosovo and various other parts of the world. We hadn’t seen that 10 years ago. I think there’s now an awareness of certain things. We’ve seen the actions of the law in terms of land possession, not just in our own country but others.”<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> Cardy, p. 18.

<sup>70</sup> Matthews, p. 27.

<sup>71</sup> Cardy, p. 18.

<sup>72</sup> Cardy, p. 18.

<sup>73</sup> Houlahan.

Considering that Barclay made the film at about the same time that ‘The First Chatham Islanders’ was exhibited, he appeared more confident that his audience could view the documentary in the context of universal human failings.

Although in interviews Barclay was not recorded as mentioning his own ethnicity in relation to his project, appearing instead to see his efforts as an attempt to grapple with the darker side of human nature common to all, it may have had a bearing on the film’s reception. Michael King argued that: “In a sense, in dealing with the Maori invasion, and the effects of it, he’s done something that I don’t think a Pakeha film-maker could have got away with. A Pakeha film-maker could have been accused of Maori-bashing.”<sup>74</sup> As a Maori, Barclay may have felt he had more freedom to explore his subject without censure, or he may have found it easier to connect the actions of one group of Maori to broader issues of human relations, seeing them as people rather than as examples of an ethnicity. Barclay also made it clear that while he believed both Europeans and Maori were instrumental in the Moriori decline, with the government of the time having the final responsibility, the events’ relevance transcended time and ethnicity.<sup>75</sup> In *The Feathers of Peace* Moriori did appear to be the victims of a deadly clash of cultural values, though they were also shown to be survivors of those encounters.<sup>76</sup> Those involved in developing ‘The First Chatham Islanders’ appeared to need to present an unequivocal case for Moriori as a strong, resilient people. Barry Barclay was more willing to explore the grey areas than sketch a story in black and white, but he was not subject to the political pressures that may have been felt by Moriori involved with the Te Papa exhibit.

Media response to the documentary demonstrated interest in both the Moriori renouncement of warfare, and in the invasion and subsequent slavery of Moriori. The New Zealand Press Association reported: “Barry Barclay’s new film *Feathers of Peace* tells the story of how the Moriori, a people who renounced violence, were almost wiped

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<sup>74</sup> Matthews, p. 27.

<sup>75</sup> Cardy, p. 18.

<sup>76</sup> *The Feathers of Peace*. For example, in ‘A Purchase of Horses’, Moriori were shown as the victims of Maori colonists’ efforts to establish the right of conquest, but in the fourth part, Hirawanu Tapu’s testimony demonstrated Moriori resilience in the face of overwhelming odds.

out by oppression and war.”<sup>77</sup> The article in *The Evening Post* opened with: “Filmmaker Barry Barclay has used modern TV news techniques to recreate the story of the destruction of the Moriori on the Chatham Islands.”<sup>78</sup> In the *Sunday Star-Times* the piece on the documentary began: “Director Barry Barclay’s film *The Feathers of Peace* tells how the Moriori became the victims of their own peaceful nature”.<sup>79</sup> The degree of emphasis varied between the articles, but all three mentioned the invasion, slavery, and the Native Land Court ruling as critical to Moriori history.<sup>80</sup>

Michael King was asked for his opinion of the documentary by the *Sunday Star-Times* and *NZ Listener*, who both reported his comments at length.<sup>81</sup> However, none of the articles included comments from members of the Moriori community, as if journalists believed that King could speak for Moriori. Although Maui Solomon was credited as being the Moriori consultant for *The Feathers of Peace*, it seemed that he had not been interviewed for the stories.<sup>82</sup> The documentary’s main focus was mid-nineteenth century Moriori history, and yet in these articles Barry Barclay and, to a lesser extent, Michael King were given ownership of the story.

### **One Culture: Two Stories**

A significant difference existed between *The Feathers of Peace* and ‘The First Chatham Islanders’, wherein the first was developed by a Maori film-maker, while the second involved collaboration between members of Te Iwi Moriori Trust Board and Te Papa staff. Whereas the museum exhibit portrayed aspects of Moriori culture chosen by a group of late twentieth century Moriori as being representative of their ancestors, the documentary focused on telling the story of a cultural collision between Moriori, and Europeans and Maori. The political tensions that developed in response to claims on Chatham Islands fisheries, and the Waitangi Tribunal claims process, may have influenced those Moriori who developed the exhibit. So may have fatigue over being

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<sup>77</sup> Houlahan.

<sup>78</sup> Cardy, p. 18.

<sup>79</sup> Lin Ferguson, ‘The End Of The Race’, *Sunday Star-Times*, 30 July 2000, p. 8.

<sup>80</sup> Houlahan, Cardy, p. 18, Ferguson, p.8.

<sup>81</sup> Ferguson, p. 8; Matthews, p. 27.

<sup>82</sup> *The Feathers of Peace*, film credits.

portrayed as victims, and fear of a backlash against Maori as a result of exposure of the 1835 invasion. Not beset by those considerations, Barclay approached his representation quite differently, though he did appear to hope that his audience could make the leap from regarding events on the Chatham Islands as being indicative of Maori and European colonisation to perceiving them as being a part of a broader history of colonisation. The result was two distinctive representations of nineteenth century Moriori culture.

Although these two projects, developed and exhibited in the last years of the century, demonstrated very different approaches to the calamities that beset Moriori in the nineteenth century, both the exhibit and the documentary centred their representations on Moriori determination to uphold their traditions in maintaining peace. By the end of the twentieth century, perceptions of Nunuku's injunction against warfare had shifted markedly since Percy Smith and Elsdon Best's work on Moriori history and culture were published during the First World War. In both the exhibit and the documentary, Moriori commitment to peace was held as worthy of celebration, not as an example of their haplessness in the face of contact with other cultures. These representations of Moriori history and culture told stories that spoke to the concerns of their late twentieth century audiences, just as Smith and Best's versions had done at the beginning of the century. The difference was that the intended audience for the exhibit and the documentary were Maori and Moriori as well as Pakeha, and that whereas prior to the 1990s the production of ideas about Moriori history was largely a Pakeha endeavour, these two final texts offered views of pre-contact and early contact Moriori life from non-Pakeha perspectives.

### **At the Century's End**

In the twentieth century's closing years, diversity of beliefs about Moriori history remained a considerable force in this history of ideas. Divergent approaches to telling stories of nineteenth century Moriori life evident in 'The First Chatham Islanders' and *The Feathers of Peace* made it clear that even the same events could be interpreted in more than one way. Aside from matters of interpretation, there also remained the issue of

New Zealanders who continued to believe that mainland Moriori had existed.<sup>83</sup> In an interview in 2000, Michael King complained of the persistence of erroneous ideas about the Moriori.

King remembers doing talkback on the *Moriori* author tour and encountering people who forgot everything they learnt at primary school *except* for misinformation about the Moriori. “A writer despairs about this. You do the leg work, you do the research, you package it in a way that a general audience can understand and then find that you only reach a tiny fraction of people.”<sup>84</sup>

Despite King’s efforts and those of other writers before him, despite the widely released *The Feathers of Peace* and the public debate over an exhibit on Moriori culture at New Zealand’s national museum, in the final year of the century Percy Smith and Elsdon Best’s legacy lingered in the minds of at least some New Zealanders.

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<sup>83</sup> This belief is evident in the following letters to the editor published in 2000: H. M. Yardley, ‘Who is Maori?’, *The Daily News*, 2 September 2000, p. 9; N.L. Caine, ‘Maori Not Indigenous’, *The Evening Post*, 14 June 2000, p. 4; Garry Steed, ‘Restless Spirits’, *The Waikato Times*, 25 October 2000, p. 6; R.A. Law, ‘Closing the Gaps’, *The Daily News*, 14 September 2000, p. 6; June L. Robertson, ‘Time to Take Responsibility’, *The Evening Post*, 12 September 2000, p. 4; M. Dillon, ‘True or False’, *The Waikato Times*, 11 September 2000, p. 6; J. Bird, ‘Glass Whares’, *The Daily News*, 2 September 2000, p. 9; Sharon Smith, ‘More Rights’, *The Waikato Times*, 4 August 2000, p. 8; Hugh Jamieson, ‘Myth of the Moriori’, *The Evening Post*, 20 June 2000, p. 6; M. Hill, ‘Waitara Links’, *The Waikato Times*, 18 May 2000, p. 6; David McKay, ‘God’s Day, Our Mountain’, *The Daily News*, 5 May 2000, p. 6; B. Mitchell, ‘Pre-Maori History’, *The Waikato Times*, 19 December 2000, p. 6.

<sup>84</sup> Matthews, p. 27 (emphasis in the original).

## 7. Drawing the Threads Together

Throughout the twentieth century, the history of ideas about Moriori origins, settlement, and culture comprised two strands of thought extending from the work of Percy Smith and Elsdon Best, and from H. D. Skinner. All three engaged in the search for Maori and Moriori origins, but were at odds over what constituted robust evidence for their theories. Smith and Best gave greatest weight to oral traditions they sourced from Maori kaumatua and re-presented for Pakeha readers, while Skinner favoured analysis of material culture, and approached oral traditions with some scepticism. Smith's belief that Maori traditions could be refashioned into historical accounts structured by an accurate chronology led to his acceptance of material offered to him by Hoani Te Whatahoro as the genuine teachings of Nepia Pohuhu and Moihi Te Matorohanga. Stories reputedly recorded by Whatahoro provided Smith with a treasure trove of traditions on which he based his Maori origins and settlement theories. His close friend, Best, came to accept the material's provenance after initial doubts, and grounded his 'Maruiwi' theory in the documents' accounts of earliest New Zealand history. The two men published their texts for the benefit not only of other New Zealand scholars but also for British anthropologists, most of whom, in the pre-Malinowskian tradition, used observations by amateurs to flesh out their own writing rather than engage in fieldwork. Yet, Smith and Best's ideas about early New Zealand history attracted greatest attention from New Zealand writers, who wove them into their own stories of the distant past. Ironically, though Smith and Best aimed to elicit approval from anthropologists at Oxford and Cambridge, they did not accept criticism of their Moriori history theories from Skinner, who had studied anthropology at Cambridge, and whose critique applied the methods he learned there from the very men whose approval Smith and Best sought.

Skinner's work on Moriori origins and material culture established the foundation for later research on the topic, but at the time his ideas failed to capture public attention possibly because they could not compete with the romantic vision of ancient conquest offered by Smith and Best's ideas. Meanwhile, Smith and Best's theories of early New Zealand settlement quickly became popular among Pakeha. Their accounts

of a hapless pre-Maori people conquered by Polynesian explorers and exiled to Chatham Islands, where they slowly dwindled to extinction, provided a survival-of-the-fittest precedent for the British colonisation of New Zealand. They also offered villainous and heroic characters to people the landscape in tales of early New Zealand by Pakeha writers. By contrast, H. D. Skinner's meticulous analysis of evidence did not inspire retellings of the past. There was no heroism apparent in his rendition of Moriori history, or at least not at the time. So while Smith and Best's versions of Moriori history filtered through several decades worth of popular literature including articles in the *School Journal* and New Zealand histories for schoolchildren published by Reed – Skinner's analysis seemed destined to remain confined to academic circles. At least two generations of New Zealand children were taught that Maori had conquered the shiftless Moriori and driven them to the sea, where they retreated to the Chatham Islands. In 1933, newspaper obituaries for Tommy Solomon declared the Moriori people to be extinct, contributing to the widely held belief that Moriori had not only been exiled, they had been annihilated.

H. D. Skinner was not alone in challenging Smith and Best's theories about Moriori origins. Other members of the Polynesian Society also offered critiques – most notably Sir Peter Buck – but they refrained from doing so in public until after Elsdon Best's death. Their rebuttals appeared to have little impact on the popularity of Smith and Best's versions of early New Zealand, and it was not until 1950 that opposition to their theories gained momentum with Roger Duff's analysis of pre-contact cultural development. Duff's moa hunter paradigm offered new insight into Polynesian settlement of New Zealand. Although it was situated within the context of stories of the Great Fleet, his theory challenged Smith and Best's notions of Moriori origins and settlement. A decade after its publication, the moa hunter paradigm filtered through to children's literature, where writers either used it in place of stories about mainland Moriori or else renamed those Moriori as the moa hunters. At this point, with other aspects of the Great Fleet orthodoxy still pivotal to the story of New Zealand, the introduction of the moa hunters added a level of confusion in some texts. It was not until the provenance of some of the material in *The Lore of the Whare-wananga* was disputed by David Simmons and Bruce Biggs, and the existence of the Great Fleet itself questioned, that the foundations of Smith and Best's mainland Moriori theories were thoroughly undermined.

Prior to the 1970s, engagement with theories of Moriori origins, settlement, and culture had largely been a Pakeha occupation. However, changes in bicultural relations wrought by a Maori cultural revival from the 1960s and increased political activism among young Maori, as well as increasing liberalism within sections of Pakeha society, paved the way for re-examinations of New Zealand's past by Maori and Pakeha. The rise of identity politics also contributed to a Moriori cultural revival. When Bill Saunders made his documentary in 1980, he believed that Moriori were an extinct people, but by the end of that decade, Moriori descendants had asserted their culture's continued survival. Their commission of a post-contact history by popular historian Michael King was perhaps the most successful strategy in their efforts to counter Smith and Best's legacy.

King based his brief account of pre-contact Moriori society on the work of H. D. Skinner, Alexander Shand, and Douglas Sutton's recent analysis of archaeological sites on Chatham Island. In 1980, Sutton provided the first study of Moriori culture since Skinner's work, arguing that pre-contact Moriori had developed a society responsive to the environmental constraints of life in the Chathams. Without the benefit of the Moriori cultural revival still to come, Sutton contested Smith and Best's ideas but viewed Moriori as a lost culture, which appeared to affect his analysis of their post-contact adaptive skills. Declarations of the continued survival of the Moriori people brought a new dimension to the history of ideas about Moriori. Michael King was credited, by Pakeha reviewers and by members of Te Iwi Moriori Trust Board, with being instrumental in bringing challenges to the old orthodoxy into the public domain. King was far from the first to dispute Smith and Best's ideas, and condemn their transmission through the education system, but his popular history captured attention in a way that other more academic texts had failed to do.

In the last years of the twentieth century, two new texts highlighted a final twist in the history's development: increased interest in the 1835 invasion and portraits of the Moriori past from non-Pakeha perspectives. In his text, *Moriori*, Michael King included an account of the 1835 invasion of the Chatham Islands by Te Ati Awa Maori, and assessed its impact on Moriori society, finding that it was one of the factors in that population's destabilisation. An exhibit at Te Papa opened in late 1998

that portrayed aspects of Moriori culture without, according to critics, making adequate mention of the invasion and its effects. This triggered fierce debate in the media. Critics argued that the exhibit misled its audience for reasons of ‘political correctness’, though Te Papa staff and Moriori involved in the exhibit denied making a deliberate decision to play down the invasion and its aftermath. A second text, Barry Barclay’s documentary *The Feathers of Peace*, dealt with the invasion in far greater depth, though Barclay attributed greatest responsibility for the near demise of Moriori to the Native Land Court rulings of 1870. Barclay deliberately chose to allow his audience to make up their own minds about events on the Chathams in the mid-nineteenth century. He understood that he could not control audience interpretations of the information in his documentary.

Percy Smith and Elsdon Best’s theories about Moriori origins, settlement, and culture provoked a long-running debate that was not resolved by the end of the century. Although a number of academics published rebuttals of the ethnologists’ ideas, from soon after Smith and Best’s texts were first published, the transmission of Smith and Best’s ideas through the education system and in popular literature entrenched beliefs about mainland Moriori in the minds of generations of Pakeha New Zealanders. Social changes and shifts in bicultural relations in the 1960s and 1970s led to a climate in which Moriori descendants could contest Smith and Best’s legacy and have their argument heard. This history of ideas began as part of efforts to identify Maori origins, but the racialism that underpinned Smith and Best’s theories later flowed into justifications of British colonisation of New Zealand through an alleged Maori conquest of another people. It also triggered concerted efforts by a small but significant number of New Zealanders – Pakeha, Moriori, and Maori – to refute and replace Smith and Best’s notions with theories based on more rigorous evidence.

## **Conclusion**

Most significantly, Pakeha engagement on both sides of the debate was critical to the development of ideas about Moriori history. From the outset, Percy Smith and Elsdon Best’s theories met with opposition from other Pakeha scholars. But because Smith and Best’s work succeeded in drawing public attention, while that of their critics was confined to academic circles, for decades it appeared that there was no debate. Numerous stories of early New Zealand history reflected Smith and Best’s ideas on

migration sequences, whereas only a handful of texts presented an opposing view. By focusing primarily on Smith and Best's legacy, it is possible to ignore the implications of this early opposition. Although stories of a pre-Maori people conquered and almost annihilated by later Polynesian arrivals represented a retrospective cultural colonisation of New Zealand's past, other analyses – based on sounder evidence – countered their versions of events and would eventually undermine their popularity. From the beginning this was a debate, at first largely among Pakeha, and not a monologue. Advancing ideas about mainland Moriori was only one aspect of the history of ideas about Moriori, a thread that ran through one strand of thought.

The importance of timing in terms of a text gaining public attention or being ignored is also significant within this history. Conjunctions between a text's publication and the state of contemporary bicultural relations were necessary for the text's initial success. In effect, it had to be an idea whose time had come, in order to succeed in capturing large audiences. At a time when many Pakeha New Zealanders believed that Maori were unlikely to recover from the effects of British colonisation, Smith and Best's theories offered comfort for those who felt a sense of responsibility for Maori population decline. Late Victorian notions of natural selection at work in human societies through wars and conquests dovetailed neatly with stories of an earlier Maori conquest of part-Melanesian settlers. Maori may have been conquered by British troops and their lands occupied by British colonists, but it was part of a cycle of cultural development in which Maori had also supplanted an 'inferior' people. It was not until decades later, when the concept of survival-of-the-fittest was no longer an acceptable model of cultural development, that stories of mainland Maori gained a subtext which attempted to discredit Maori claims of oppression. The social changes that triggered renewed Maori political activism – and a backlash from some Pakeha – also provided a platform for those who disputed Smith and Best's ideas about Moriori history. Their revision of ideas that were long held to be historical fact by most Pakeha strengthened opposition to Smith and Best's influence. It also paved the way for a Pakeha social historian to produce a text, based on efforts by academics to refute theories of mainland Moriori across decades, which finally succeeded in capturing the imaginations of Pakeha, thanks to the author's popularity, his compelling account of Moriori history, and its publication's timing.

Yet, even though this side of the debate finally reached the public domain, it did not guarantee that audiences interpreted texts in the manner in which their authors intended. From the beginning of the century, audience interpretations of texts created shifts of meaning in stories of pre-contact New Zealand. For instance, Elsdon Best developed his theory of New Zealand's initial settlement by Melanesian castaways to explain what he saw as examples of non-Polynesian cultural practices and artefacts, rather than as a deliberate justification of British colonisation. He may have been startled by the notion that, decades later, his theory could be viewed as a retrospective colonisation of the past. The issue of interpretation was arguably most prominent in the controversy surrounding 'The First Chatham Islanders' exhibit, which exposed fears among those who developed the exhibit that the 1835 invasion could be used in place of mainland Moriori stories to condemn Maori. Therefore, the interplay between texts and interpretation and, in particular, reaction to the popularity of the idea of mainland Moriori by some of the authors featured in this thesis, contributed to the development of ideas about Moriori history in a way that was not always immediately apparent in the texts.

Most of the authors whose work made a significant contribution to this history of ideas were Pakeha. And yet, the earliest texts assessed – by Alexander Shand, Percy Smith, and Elsdon Best – could not have been produced without the efforts of Hirawanu Tapu and Hoani Te Whatahoro. Over decades, Tapu collected traditions from Moriori elders, interviewing them in their own language, and working with Shand to transcribe them into an approximation of Moriori. Shand intended that their research assist future generations of Pakeha scholars, but Tapu collected traditions in order to preserve them for their own sake. Te Whatahoro's motives in claiming that the material he gave to Smith and Best was the genuine teachings of tohunga may have been more complex than the reasons for Tapu's collaboration with Shand. But without his documents the ethnologists may not have published their theories of mainland Moriori, and this history of ideas may have taken a different path as a consequence. Decades later, the commission of a post-contact history by Moriori descendants brought evidence from academic refutations of Smith and Best's Moriori theories to public attention, highlighting the other side of a long-running debate. Inspired by that history, Ngati Apa film-maker Barry Barclay made a documentary on events that occurred on the Chatham Islands in the mid-nineteenth century and this

allowed audiences to make up their own minds about who was responsible for the decimation of the Moriori population. Also at the end of the century, in an exhibit at Te Papa, Moriori descendants presented themselves as a people who possessed a long history of pacifism: a shift from being textual subjects to authors instead. Whereas once, texts on Moriori history and culture were written largely by Pakeha and occasionally by Maori, in the late 1990s Moriori descendants represented themselves in the public domain through 'The First Chatham Islanders'.

Percy Smith and Elsdon Best's ideas about Moriori history attracted the attention of generations of New Zealanders, whether as an explanation of New Zealand's earliest history, an example of Pakeha racism, or as a flawed analysis to be refuted. Together, these ideas and reactions to them form a history of their own, which speaks not only of ideas about pre-contact cultural development, but also of negotiations between Maori, Moriori, and Pakeha for a sense of belonging in the present as well as a sense of connection to the past.

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