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Anthropological Research in New Zealand

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I.

Interest in Anthropology has been intense in New Zealand almost from the earliest period of white settlement, although it is only in recent years that professional research has taken place. For many years research in New Zealand was in the hands of amateurs who, while they recorded much fascinating detail, also allowed to pass unrecorded much that the modern anthropologist believes to be indispensable. This concentration on those aspects of *Maori* life consistent with the interests of individual researchers leaves us with a fragmentary and uneven documentation in the period immediately after European contact.

The earliest records available are of course those contained in the Journals of James Cook¹ who in 1769 claimed New Zealand for the British Crown and thereafter charted the islands and made wide observations of their inhabitants. Cook's expedition was a scientific one and the two botanists Banks and Solander recorded for the natural history of New Zealand what Cook did for the human inhabitants. The observations, together with the contemporary drawings, give us the only authentic account dating from the eighteenth century. Although in the later years of the century New Zealand was visited with increasing frequency, it was mainly by whalers and sealers, using the many fine harbours as bases for their operations.

The next stage of ethnographic work occurred when European settlement began in earnest. There are a number of accounts dating from this period, i. e. published in the later 40's, of observations made about 1810. All include some references to Maori culture and some are of considerable value. F. E. Maning² who called himself a '*pakeha-Maori*' gives a valuable account of *Maori* life and of the subtleties of custom of which he had unique experience, since he married a woman of distinguished lineage and became, more certainly than many an anthropologist since, if his account is to be believed, a 'member of the tribe'. Accounts of lesser value survive from Polack³, a trader, and Augustus Earle⁴ and others.

¹ Cook: 1777: 1784: 1955.

² Maning: 1948.

³ Polack: 1838: 1840.

⁴ Earle: 1909.

The settler documents are augmented by the careful observation of Samuel Marsden⁵, the first Anglican Missionary to reach New Zealand. Marsden's first journey was made in 1814 and on his recommendation the Church Missionary Society sent out Thomas Kendall to establish a mission. Kendall perceived that the work of Christianization could not be furthered without a more precise knowledge of the Maori language and he was able to persuade two important chiefs of the *Ngapuhi* tribe, *Hongi* and *Waikato*, to accompany him to England where, with Professor Lee of Cambridge, a detailed study of the language was made⁶.

The visit of *Hongi Hika* to England was to have wider repercussions for New Zealand than the improvement of Maori orthography, for it was the war, initiated by his kinsman *Hone Heke* in 1845, which brought to New Zealand Captain (later Sir) George Grey, whose two volumes of Maori texts⁷ are regarded still as valuable sources of myth and song. Grey's original purpose was to facilitate his own understanding of the mythological frame of reference in which Maori dialectic operated. He published, however, a translation⁸ of his original texts, which, if it reveals a tendency to Bowdlerize and interpret the legends, still provides the only worthwhile translation at present available.

Grey's techniques of recording were imperfect. Studies of the Grey papers, by Dr. B. G. Biggs⁹ of Auckland University, reveal that Grey frequently made changes in the texts, and seldom acknowledged his sources. Peter Buck¹⁰ indeed gives a line by line reading of a translation by Grey in which a high degree of 'interpretation' is revealed. If the Grey translations do not meet modern requirements, his original texts, both published and unpublished, provide important source material.

In the mid-nineteenth century New Zealand was still one of the world's frontier areas, and as such attracted a number of adventurous men. Many books with some reference to Maori life, mainly traveller's accounts by people who spoke little of the language, date from this period. There is little of real value in most of these chance observations, but they indicate the interest felt by many people in the *Maori*.

The use and nature of *Maori* artifacts and much detail of costume, house and village construction and the like comes to us from another

⁵ Elder: 1932: 1934.

⁷ Grey: 1851: 1854: 1857.

⁹ Biggs: 1952 and see Luomala: 1961.

⁶ Kendall & Lee: 1820.

⁸ Grey: 1885.

¹⁰ Buck: 1949 p. 49 et seq.

source, the drawings of George French Angas¹¹ whose fine draughtsmanship and sharp eye gave a valuable record of much in *Maori* life. Where Maning had seen fit to record the details of *tapu*, warfare and magic as he had experienced them, Angas supplies the visual detail which dates from an only slightly later period.

II.

Amateur ethnography

The settler period in ethnographic recording may be said to have ended with the North Island wars of the eighteen-fifties and sixties which resulted in the withdrawal of the *Maoris* of the central North Island from European contact and a bitter disillusionment which still has its effect in *Maori* politics¹².

Government indifference to *Maori* aspirations and the grasping land confiscations after the wars made ethnographic work more difficult by far than formerly. In addition, changes were rapidly taking place in *Maori* life. It seems likely that by the seventies the greater part of the *Maori* arts were no longer practised; villages and *pas** had been destroyed and disease as well as warfare had greatly reduced the *Maori* population. In these circumstances then the interest of ethnographers was to salvage as much as possible of the older culture. Elsdon Best and S. Percy Smith are the dominant figures of the period. The influence of A. C. Haddon and E. B. Tylor was important in this new style of ethnographic reporting, and both Best and Smith, although their reports would hardly satisfy the standards of post-Malinowskian fieldwork, are nonetheless full and painstaking.

As a government surveyor Best spent some sixteen years in an area, the *Urewera* country, where European contact had been minimal, amongst a tribe, the *Tuboe*, whose confidence he gradually won. The results of his researches are embodied in a two volume work *Tuboe*¹³ and in many articles and monographs published between about 1900 and his death in 1931¹⁴. Best's interests ranged widely, he dealt in myth, custom, religion, magic, technology and in speculations which dominated local ethnographic interest. In the matter of social organization however he was sketchy and it is regrettable that he gave no full account of the social organization of the area in which he worked.

¹¹ Angas: 1847: 1850.

¹² For a full understanding of the contemporary *Maori* situation the history of the wars should be known. Readers should consult either Sinclair: 1957: 1959.

¹³ Best: 1925.

¹⁴ see bibliography for representative works.

* *pa* ist der *Maori*-Ausdruck für ein befestigtes Dorf, eine Art Wallburg (Anm. der Redaktion).

There is little in this 'golden age' of Maori ethnographic research, to assist the modern structuralist.

Smith's work was carried out among the tribes of Northern New Zealand more especially about the Auckland area. His interests were more definitely "historical" than were Best's. He contributed a notably detailed account of tribal warfare¹⁵ and studies of genealogies as well as translations of *Maori* texts, but his primary interest was that which dominated the close of the nineteenth and earlier twentieth century, that of the origin of the *Maori* people¹⁶. Speculation on this problem led to the propounding of elaborate theories which placed the *Maori* homeland in almost every country except Antarctica. Smith was led to establish comparisons between migration myths of New Zealand and other Polynesian areas. Issues of the *Journal of the Polynesian Society* are filled with many such articles in the nineteen hundreds. The publication in 1913 of the accounts of the School of Learning¹⁷ of *Te Maatorohanga* climaxed this period and led to a series of misunderstandings rightly criticized later by Sir Peter Buck (*Te Rangihiroa*)¹⁸. Smith's faith in traditional accounts has died hard in New Zealand and occasional returns to it still occur. In the quest for origins Smith preserved much that was of value and contributed many stimulating ideas. His general view that *Maori* migrations refer ultimately to an Asian homeland, while based on the only evidence then available, has received some support in recent years.

The encyclopaedic approach to New Zealand ethnography was well typified by White¹⁹, Tregear²⁰ and Best but had its most elegant exponent in Sir Peter Buck. Before turning to his work which belongs properly to a more recent period, it is necessary to note the influence of another major *Maori* figure Sir *Apirana Ngata*²¹. A Member of Parliament, and Minister of the Crown for many years, *Ngata* was deeply involved in all aspects of *Maori* Affairs. He edited a new version of Grey's *Nga Moteatea*²² with the aim of providing a text for students of *Maori* language and added many chants and songs to the original collection as well as adding valuable notes and source annotations to the original texts. *Ngata* as well translated some of the songs selected for his *Nga Moteatea*. This with the reissue of Grey's *Nga Mabi*²³, and the subsequent reprinting of the fifth edition of Williams²⁴ *Maori*

¹⁵ Smith: 1910.

¹⁷ Smith: 1913.

¹⁹ White: 1877.

²¹ Polynesian Society: 1951.

²² *Ngata*: 1928 and see *Ngata*: 1959 (Jones ed).

²³ Grey: 1929.

¹⁶ Smith: 1896: 1910a.

¹⁸ Buck: 1949.

²⁰ Tregear: 1904.

²⁴ Williams: 1917.

Dictionary provided students with useful basic materials for the study of Maori language.

Sir Peter Buck is justly famous both in New Zealand and elsewhere. A *Maori* himself (his major book is published under his Maori name *Te Rangi Hiroa*), Buck was the most recent of those who sought to write an all embracing ethnography of the *Maori* people. "The Coming of the Maori" reviews the myths of migration and analyzes some earlier theories and is severely critical of the traditional material which Smith had accepted; he provides a useful antidote to the copious writings of earlier investigators although his time scale for the settlement of New Zealand would now be regarded as inadequate. Buck also reviews information on technology, social organization and language in the light of more recent research.

III.

In a sense Buck's great work brought a period in New Zealand ethnology to a close. It is not possible to say that the change is merely one from amateur to professional anthropology (indeed the chronic shortage of research funds forces most workers to carry on in an unpaid capacity), but it is also a change of orientation.

After 1945, certainly after 1949, it becomes no longer possible to speak of New Zealand ethnology or anthropology, or of *Maori* studies, the field becomes clearly differentiated into sociology, archaeology, social anthropology, linguistics, physical anthropology. Each of these universes of discourse has its own specific problems, although frequent interchanges of ideas have occurred.

This tendency does not belong entirely to the present however, two leading names in Social Anthropology today are those of Raymond Firth²⁵ and the late Felix Keesing²⁶; both had published before 1930 studies of the *Maori* and Firth's economic treatise has become a classic in its field. Neither Firth nor Keesing however made New Zealand his major interest and it was not until the post war period that intensive studies within New Zealand started.

Beaglehole published in 1946 the results of a community study carried out in a rural township and gave in this a stimulating account of the building of Maori character structure²⁷. This interest, which is more akin to American cultural anthropology, perhaps than to British, was furthered in more recent studies in collaboration with J. E. Ritchie in a research project called 'The *Rakau Maori* Studies'²⁸. Subsequently

²⁵ Firth: 1929.

²⁷ Beaglehole: 1946.

²⁶ Keesing: 1928.

²⁸ Beaglehole: 1958.

Ausubel has contributed a study of the social factors affecting the achievement and aspiration of *Maori* adolescents²⁹.

In 1948 Adkin's notable study of the traditions and place names of a single district '*Horowhenua*' appeared³⁰ and in more recent years this has led to his formation of a time scale for the occupation of New Zealand which pays considerable attention to traditional sources³¹. A further dimension has been added to the discussion by Sharp's analyses of traditional accounts and of the factor of accident involved in *Maori* migration³². Perhaps the most significant contribution of the 1950's has come from Dr. Roger Duff³³ of the Canterbury Museum. His study of river mouth sites in the South Island has been the first major archaeological study to establish a cultural sequence for New Zealand. For archaeologists Duff's studies of adze typology and a definitive assemblage for what he has called the *Moa*-hunter period have been of the greatest significance and have formed the basis for a rethinking of the time sequence in New Zealand. Duff's research has been confined mainly to the South Island but in the North Island the establishment of a Chair in Anthropology in 1950 at the University of Auckland and the appointment of lecturers in *Maori* studies, Archaeology, Social Anthropology and Physical Anthropology, has given great impetus to research in a variety of fields.

Archaeology has been furthered by the establishment of a vigorous University Archaeological Society which together with the New Zealand Archaeological Society has provided workers for a number of important research projects aimed at establishing culture sequences of the North Island. A controversy on the scheme for New Zealand culture sequences is reviewed in articles by Golson³⁴ and Adkin³⁵ in the *Journal of the Polynesian Society* and Golson has presented his own position in the volume of essays presented to H. D. Skinner³⁶.

The problem of *Maori* origins is however no longer the central issue. Archaeology in New Zealand is now concerned with the establishment of stratigraphical sequences and sociological reconstruction, and each new investigation appears to indicate a greater complexity than was formerly expected.

Graduate students of the Anthropology Department, University of Auckland, have shown interest not only in *Maori* research but also in other non-European minorities such as the Cook Islanders and

²⁹ Ausubel: 1961.

³¹ Adkin: 1960.

³³ Duff: 1956.

³⁵ Adkin: 1960.

³⁰ Adkin: 1948.

³² Sharp: 1956: 1957.

³⁴ Golson: 1960: 1961.

³⁶ Golson: 1959.

Indians. Recently M. Groves and T. Storm of Auckland collaborated in a research project in a forestry community which is referred to as 'Forest Village' in a gloss written by Groves for the University of Auckland Gazette, Vol. 4, No. 2, 1962. A full account of this work is awaited with interest.

Maori language has received attention both from linguists and translators over the years³⁷ but, more recently the recognition of *Maori* as a language unit which may be used to satisfy degree prerequisites has led to a greater undergraduate student interest. A modern linguistic approach to *Maori* is described by Bruce Biggs³⁸ whose studies of *Maori* Social life are of importance to the scholar³⁹. A. P. Vayda has contributed also a valuable monograph on *Maori Warfare*⁴⁰.

An important step in translation is the publication of the A. T. *Nga Moteatea* with translations by P. te H. Jones⁴¹. While the manner of these translations is somewhat old fashioned Jones' own insight, notes, and re-editing of *Ngata's* work make this book an invaluable aid to others interested in the *Maori* chants and songs. Jones has also contributed a valuable booklet on *Maori* poetry.

Maori verse has also attracted notice outside the purely scholarly field and the present writer collaborated with Allen Curnow⁴² in the production of a series of translations. This work continues.

The study of Art forms has perhaps received less attention than any other from New Zealand scholars. It is necessary to mention here the names of Gilbert Archey and W. J. Phillips both of whom have made valuable studies of *Maori* carving but this field still remains virtually untouched. The unpublished work of Theo. Schoon⁴³, an immigrant artist who has lived in New Zealand since 1939 should be mentioned. Schoon, working first for the Internal Affairs Department and later on his own, recorded vast numbers of cave drawings at many sites

³⁷ Luomala: 1961.

³⁹ Biggs: 1960.

⁴¹ Jones: 1959.

³⁸ Biggs: 1961.

⁴⁰ Vayda: 1960.

⁴² Curnow: 1960.

⁴³ Schoon has asked for the inclusion of the following statement on contemporary *Maori* art: "The general attitude towards present day *Maori* art in New Zealand, is that it is decadent and has no place in museum or art gallery. This material mainly serves existing *Maori* tribal needs. Some exceptional individuals have experimented in the fusion of traditional *Maori* elements with European influences. One or two of these have created some extraordinary works of art which have not been equalled in any other culture in transition. Whereas most indigenous art in decline descends to a common level of folk art, the *Maori* tradition was still sufficiently virile to give these European influenced carvings the power of first rate works of art. There is another range of work, mainly the result of effort, which may be classed as folk art, possessing an indefinable Polynesian charm all its own."

throughout both islands. This highly perishable art (much of it damaged by sheltering farm animals, and in some cases submerged in hydro lakes), went virtually undiscovered until Schoon's work revealed it. It is perhaps a comment on local apathy that these discoveries have received scant attention since.

Conclusion

The scope of New Zealand anthropology is wide and it has not been possible in this article to give more than the most general sketch of much important research. Inevitably the omissions are many, particularly in the post-war period. On the other hand, because New Zealand is a small country with limited resources, much remains to be done. The history of Anthropology as a University study is short and the number of graduate students small. Many of these leave New Zealand to carry on their professional careers elsewhere.

In spite of the fact that the funds available for research are small, a large amount of research has been carried on and much of it published either as Monographs of the Polynesian Society or in summary in its Journal, the most valuable guide to contemporary research in New Zealand available.

It has not been possible in this article to assess the direction of New Zealand research or to suggest areas where development might take place. To attempt to prophesy would be foolhardy in the extreme. It is safe to say, however, that New Zealand and the South West Pacific area remain new ground for anthropological research and consequently the possibilities for both fieldwork and academic studies have few immediate limits.

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Note: The following is not an exhaustive list but merely a guide to important or representative works. For studies published before 1950 readers should consult Taylor 1951, and subsequent to that date, the Journal of the Polynesian Society (*J.P.S.*), Wellington, New Zealand.

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