Maori Socio-Political Organization in Pre- and Proto-History

On the evolution of post-colonial constructs

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ABSTRACT

At present it is widely assumed that the socio-political organisation of Maori society is made up of four structural levels: the ‘extended family’, the ‘sub-tribe’, the ‘tribe’ and the ‘super-tribe’, each of which, in turn, corresponds with a certain type of Maori leader. It is rarely realised that a consensus about this framework for understanding Maori socio-political organisation did not emerge until the 1930s, approximately 150 years after colonial contact had begun. This raises the question to what extent the standard model of Maori socio-political organisation is based on the same a-historic and objectivist assumptions that were held around the turn of the century when it was developed. The extent to which these assumptions may have influenced the ethnohistorical and ethnographic analysis of Maori society in past and present also requires examination. It is argued that an essentialist model of Maori tribal organisation hampers the understanding of the dynamics of socio-political practices in Maori society.

Nowadays it is almost a truism to argue that the oral tradition of the New Zealand Maori has been influenced by European reconstructions of their history. This has become most obvious through critical re-examinations of the historical process of resolving the enigma of the whence and whither of the Maori, which European immigrants in New Zealand have speculated about ever since they first set foot ashore (cf. Sorrenson 1979, Hanson 1989). Canonical answers to the questions where the Maori came from, how they made their way to New Zealand, and how they lived when they arrived there were not formulated until the turn of the century, when Percy Smith, Surveyor General and Commissioner of Crown Land, (co-)editor of The Journal of the Polynesian Society, established a reputation as free lance ethnographer avant la lettre.

In 1898 and 1899 Smith published a series of articles in which he identified the original homeland of the Maori as Hawaiki. At the same time, he traced the origin of ‘the Polynesian race’ to the Gangetic Basin, from where the Maori were believed to have moved, via Tahiti and Rarotonga, to New Zealand. Smith (1910a) introduced a chronology for New Zealand prehistory in which the Maori navigator Kupe was awarded the honour of having been the first to discover New Zealand, later followed by Toi and later still by a Great Fleet of canoes, containing people who were believed to have settled Aotearoa, the land of the ‘long white cloud’, around approximately 1350. For long this chronology was accepted as the basic framework for New Zealand prehistory. In addition, it became incorporated in Maori oral tradition, as did the mythological Hawaiki. Thus, when in their ceremonial speeches (whaikoorero) Maori elders pay respect to their ancestors in ‘Hawaiki-nui, Hawaiki-roa, Hawaiki-paa-mamo’ (Great Hawaiki-nui, Hawaiki-roa, Hawaiki-paa-mamo’ (Great...
Hawaiki, Long Hawaiki, Distant Hawaiki), or when they attribute the discovery and settlement of New Zealand to Kupe, Toi and later the Great Fleet, they, in fact, echo the legendary voice of Smith.

Notwithstanding continuing references to Hawaiki, Kupe, Toi and the Great Fleet in Maori ceremonial speeches, Smith's reconstructions of Maori history have gradually been abandoned. His highly speculative ideas of Maori history have had to give way to the results of recent archaeological inquiries which are based on more reliable research methods than the antiquated philological and genealogical approach which ultimately rested on the belief in the infallibility of the memory of the Maori 'man of learning' (tohunga; cf. Groube 1985: 7)). In this article, however, I do not intend to contribute to the still ongoing quest for the original Maori homeland and the year of first settlement of New Zealand (McLeod 1988). Leaving these still unresolved questions to archaeologists I wish to argue that the conclusions drawn from the dismantlement of perspectives on Maori history which emerged late nineteenth century or early this century, have been rather limited, particularly in the field of social and political organisation.

Nowadays it is generally assumed that the social organisation of Maori society is made up of four structural levels: the whaanau or 'extended family', the hapuu or 'sub-tribe', the iwi or 'tribe' and the waka or 'confederation of tribes' (e.g. Metge 1976: 127-38; Walker 1990: 63-5; see also Sutton 1990: 668-9). Furthermore, each of these levels is supposed to correspond with a certain type of Maori leader: kaumaatua or 'elder', rangatira or 'chief', junior and senior ariki or 'paramount chief' (e.g. Metge 1976: 200-3; Walker 1990: 63-6; see also Sutton 1990: 668-9). There can be no doubt that this model of Maori socio-political organisation to some extent corresponds with the structure and practice of twentieth-century Maori society, but the widespread reification of the model, its substantivization 'out of time', its projection into nineteenth century and pre-colonial history as well as its perpetuation into the present, cannot be justified.

It must be realised that a consensus about this framework for understanding Maori socio-political organisation did not emerge until the 1930s, while it is mainly based on research data that were collected around the turn of the century, more than 100 years after colonial contact had begun. This raises the question to what extent the standard model of Maori socio-political organisation is, like Smith's interpretations of the whence and whither of the Maori, based on a-historic and objectivist assumptions which were common around the turn of the century when it was developed. In this article I seek to address this issue and its implications for the analysis of Maori society, both in pre- and proto-history and in contemporary New Zealand. It will be argued that the standard model has hampered an adequate understanding of the fluid nature of Maori socio-political practices. Thus, this article provides not only a specific case-study of the epistemological flaws of structural-functionalism, but above all of the extent to which models framed in this long outdated theoretical paradigm have lingered on in more recent scholarship. In addition, it is intended to testify to the value of recent theoretical shifts in anthropology and social sciences, arguing strongly against the predominance of realism and the search for primordial authenticity in ethnography and ethnohistory (e.g. Clifford & Marcus 1986; Marcus & Fischer 1986).

I begin with a more elaborate outline of the model of Maori socio-political organisation as formulated in the beginning of this century. Next, I analyse the main characteristics of the model, primarily by situating the representation of Maori forms of social and political organisation in a historical perspective. Subsequently, I re-examine New Zealand prehistory as well as the first stage of colonial contact in the light of my critical review of the a-historic and essentialist assumptions of the widely accepted model of Maori socio-political organisation. There is sufficient evidence to support the view that the organisation of Maori society was reinforced under the influence of colonial settlement. Hence I shall conclude that the model of Maori socio-political organisation
which is the subject of analysis in this article, is a post-colonial construct which prevents a more dynamic conceptualisation of Maori society, past and present.

**THE MODEL OF MAORI SOCIO-POLITICAL ORGANISATION**

When the Maori hauled up their canoes in New Zealand and gradually settled there between the fifth and tenth century a tribal structure of socio-political and economic organisation began to evolve. The formation of the tribal structure of Maori society is difficult to reconstruct as it can only be inferred from archaeological evidence. A reconstruction of the tribal structure of Maori society as it operated when James Cook arrived in 1769 is equally hazardous, since most written sources date from at least five decades later. There exists, nevertheless, a communis opinio on a basic outline of Maori socio-political organisation in the pre-European era. An ideal type of Maori socio-political organisation was first formulated by the New Zealand economist, later anthropologist, Raymond Firth in his doctoral dissertation of 1927, entitled *Primitive Economics of the New Zealand Maori*, which was published in 1929. Firth’s model of Maori socio-political organisation has become authoritative among both European and Maori scholars (e.g. Buck (1949), Metge (1976), Kawharu (1977), Walker (1990) and Winiata (1967)). Although some of these scholars nuanced and/or amended several aspects of Firth’s views, his basic outline of Maori socio-political organisation has never been challenged and shall therefore be taken as point of departure for the following synopsis.

**Kinship**

According to Firth (1959 [1929]: 111) the basic unit of Maori society was the *whaanau*. Literally the concept of whaanau may be translated as ‘to give birth’, but since Firth, the term is commonly glossed as ‘extended family’. *Whaanau* ranged through three or four generations and typically consisted of a man, his wife and their unmarried children, some of their married children (usually the sons), and the latter’s spouses and children. Extended families often lived in unprotected villages called *kaainga*, which were generally located in close proximity to a tribal or sub-tribal stronghold (*paa*) in which they were allotted a separate section for sleeping, cooking and storing food and to which they moved in off-seasons as well as in times of war (Buck 1949: 137-40, 331-3; cf. Firth 1959 [1929]: 92, 113). Extended families exercised rights to land and its products and the apportionment of food was largely managed at their level. All in all, extended families managed their own social and economic affairs except when those affected village or (sub-)tribal policy (*ibid.* 111).

Firth (1959 [1929]: 111-2) pointed out that over the years many whaanau extended into kinship groups of the clan-type. As *whaanau* increased in numbers some groups were assumed to separate themselves after which they developed into autonomous whaanau while maintaining close links with their relations. The blood ties between members of different *whaanau* were expressed through the concept of *hapuu*, literally meaning ‘pregnancy’, which represented the idea of birth from a common ancestor (Buck 1949: 333). The concept indicates that *hapuu* ‘carried’ a responsibility for all *whaanau* members whom they encompassed. *Hapuu* consisted of a group of kin which occupied a common territory and defined itself by descent from an apical, often eponymous ancestor who had lived several generations ago.

As several *whaanau* constituted a *hapuu*, several *hapuu* made up a group linked together by descent from a relatively remote founder ancestor (Firth 1959 [1929]: 114). Groups at this level were called *iwi*, the literal meaning of which is ‘bone’, which indicates a relation of common descent. However, Firth (*ibid.* 139) argued that political and
economic functions of *iwi* were restricted to an all-embracing over-right to the land within its borders. Its articulation as a kinship grouping stemmed according to him largely from the organisation of lavish feasts.

The highest level of the tribal structure was, in the perspective set out by Firth (1959 [1929]: 115-6), formed by the *waka*, the ‘canoe’, consisting of various *iwi* which had emerged from ancestors who had reached the shores of Aotearoa in the same canoe. However, no co-operative form of government existed among them. They were purely based on the belief of common descent from the same ancestor(s). Descent thus was the root principle of the social organisation of Maori society.

**Kinship rules and terms**

Firth described the dominant principles of the tribal organisation of Maori society as ambilateral affiliation and ambilineal descent. Approximately thirty years after his doctoral research he explained that he had introduced the term ambilateral as against bilateral to indicate that in Maori society affiliation was optative and that use of both parents was not automatic or necessary (Firth 1957: 5; 1963: 32). He had called Maori *hapuu* ambilateral groups since both mother and father were eligible for kinship affiliation (Firth 1959 [1929]: 112). If the parents were of the same *hapuu*, children had a double qualification for affiliation to the *hapuu*. If the parents were of different *hapuu*, the children could affiliate to two *hapuu*. By the same token, males and females could figure in the same genealogical line. *Hapuu* were frequently composed of persons tracing their descent through a line of mixed male and female links. To describe this optative mechanism 'for the maintenance of group continuity through the generations by using male or female links without set order', Firth (1957: 6) proposed the term ambilineal.

In his published doctoral dissertation Firth (1959 [1929]: 112-3) hesitated to follow the custom of labelling the *hapuu* a ‘clan’, because in anthropology the term is normally reserved for exogamous, unilineal groups, while *hapuu* are ambilineal and practically endogamous. In addition, clans are commonly understood to be made up of several lineages, while *hapuu* are not. In his discussion of Polynesian descent groups in the late 1950s and early 1960s, therefore, Firth no longer defined the Maori *hapuu* at the same level as clan. He introduced the term ‘ramage’ to distinguish the Maori *hapuu* and other restricted ambilateral kin groups from unilineal descent groups generally referred to as lineages (ibid. 1957: 6; 1963: 32).

In contrast to rammages or ramified lineages, clans are units of a higher order at which common descent is still assumed but all genealogical connections cannot necessarily be demonstrated (Fox 1967: 49). Although the concept of clan is generally reserved for unilineal descent groupings, for lack of a better term ‘clan’ may be used in reference to the Maori concept of *iwi*. The *waka*, a cluster of several ‘clans’ combined into a single grouping, may accordingly be termed a ‘phratry’ (cf. Keesing 1975: 31).

**FIGURE 1. Kingroup terminology**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Maori term</th>
<th>Literal translation</th>
<th>Kingroup term</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Whaanau</td>
<td>'to give birth'</td>
<td>extended family</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hapuu</td>
<td>'pregnancy'</td>
<td>ramage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iwi</td>
<td>'bones'; 'people'</td>
<td>clan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Waka</td>
<td>'canoe'</td>
<td>phratry</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Chieftainship**

In Firth's view (1959 [1929]: 106) descent not only structured the social organisation of
Maori society, but also its political organisation. Maori political organisation paralleled Maori social organisation. The position of chiefs in the hierarchical order of political organisation in Maori society corresponded to the structure of kinship groupings. While Firth set out the guidelines for this view of Maori political organisation, it was elaborated upon by the Maori anthropologist Maharaia Winiata. The ‘paramount chief’ in Maori society was the ariki, meaning the ‘first-born’. In his pedigree the senior lines of all tribal genealogies converged. Hence he was recognised as the head of the iwi. Senior ariki were in some situations distinguished as head of the waka. The chief of the hapuu or the rangatira ranked lower than the paramount chief since he descended along junior lines. The head of the extended family was the kaumaatua or ‘(respected) elder’, recognised on account of his offspring as well as his age, wisdom and life-experience (Winiata 1956; 1967: 25-42).

FIGURE 2. Kin group and leadership position

\[
\begin{array}{ccc}
\text{waka} & - & \text{senior ariki} \\
\text{iwi} & - & \text{ariki} \\
\text{hapuu} & - & \text{rangatira} \\
\text{whaanau} & - & \text{kaumaatua}
\end{array}
\]

Over the years this model of Maori socio-political organisation has become classic. As a result, the assumptions that underlay its development by Raymond Firth and its further development by particularly Peter Buck and Maharaia Winiata, have been forgotten. A reflection on the theoretical implications of the model is long overdue.

TRANSLATING MAORI SOCIO-POLITICAL CONCEPTS

A first problem arises from the translation of Maori concepts of socio-political organisation. Since Firth it has become accepted to translate the Maori concept of iwi as ‘tribe’. However, ‘tribe’ suggests a coherence that exceeded the affinal ties within iwi, at least until well after colonial contact began. It is now widely assumed that the composition of tribes, both in pre- and post-contact years, used to be rather disjunct and flexible (Metge 1986: 37). As corporate groups iwi are even likely to be a post-colonial development, a point I will elaborate below.

Since the beginning of this century the translation of two other Maori concepts of social organisation has also been derived from the current translation of iwi as ‘tribe’. Hapuu is usually glossed as ‘sub-tribe’, even though Firth himself consistently used hapuu in the Maori vernacular, while waka, or ‘canoe’, is sometimes represented as ‘super-tribe’. However, both are quite inaccurate characterizations of the forms of Maori organisations they are supposed to express.

FIGURE 3. Current translations of Maori kingroups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Maori term</th>
<th>Usual translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Whaanau</td>
<td>extended family</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hapuu</td>
<td>sub-tribe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iwi</td>
<td>tribe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Waka</td>
<td>super-tribe</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The term ‘sub-tribe’ is a misleading translation of hapuu as it suggests that it concerns a mere sub-group of a larger encompassing ‘tribe’ (Metge 1986: 37). However, the hapuu

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is likely to have been a central unit of social action in Maori society (Schwimmer 1966: 34; Lian 1987: 454), something which is reflected in the literal meaning of *hapuu* as ‘pregnancy’, indicating a ‘genesis from within’ (Schwimmer 1978: 211; see also Schwimmer 1990). In addition, nineteenth century ethnography shows that members of the same *hapuu* did not only live in or around a common fortified village, but also that they worked together for most purposes, both economic and ceremonial (Best 1941 [1924], I: 338ff.; Firth 1959 [1929]: 113), although the extent to which this was the result of colonial contact requires further analysis. Did not members of the same *hapuu* work together more intensively under the novel circumstances of colonial settlement?

Along the same lines as *hapuu* and *iwi* being translated by the terms ‘sub-tribe’ and ‘tribe’, so *waka* is often translated by ‘super-tribe’. However, *waka* invariably appear to have operated as loosely structured confederations of tribes, between which the link was probably more sentimental than political. As early as 1949 Buck (1949: 336) even suggested that *waka* are likely to have been galvanized by post-colonial developments as well. Remarkably, however, Buck’s suggestion about a reinforcement of the tribal organisation of Maori society under the influence of colonial settlement has never given rise to an examination of the historical evolution of the Maori tribal organisation, which, in turn, could have triggered a more substantial reflection on the current conceptual framework of Maori socio-political organisation. Before situating the subject of analysis in a historical perspective, however, it is first necessary to address another problematic aspect of the model of Maori socio-political organisation.

**PRACTICE AND IDEOLOGY OF DESCENT**

A second problem with the model of Maori socio-political structures involves the underlying theory of progressive segmentation of tribal organisations and the implications for an adequate understanding of their dynamics. In 1949 the Maori scholar Peter Buck (1949:333) made the strongest case for this theory, while Firth (1959 [1929]:111-2, 114) was ambivalent about it. The latter wrote about the process of whaanau developing into *hapuu* by increasing in numbers (ibid. 111-2) as well as about the subdivision of minor *hapuu* from major *hapuu* (ibid. 114), but because he did not situate his remarks into a historical perspective, it is unclear whether he was simply referring to the periodical genesis of new *hapuu*, or if his statements had implications for a reconstruction of the formation of Maori tribal organisations over time. However, after Buck’s explicit advocacy of the theory of progressive segmentation sparked off a debate on the historical evolution of Maori socio-political organisation, Firth (1957) questioned the basic assumption that the segmentary structure of Maori society resulted from progression over time. He argued that in any explanation of the evolution of Maori tribal organisation adequate weight is to be given to the fluid nature of the relationship between groups, the waxing of minor segments and the waning of major segments (Firth 1957: 7). Indeed, a simultaneous development of the various structural levels of Maori socio-political organisation is more obvious, but the question of how this occurred precisely can only be the subject of speculation.

In spite of Firth’s cogent rejection of the assumption of progressive segmentation in the late 1950s, however, Maori socio-political organisation is often still portrayed in a way reminiscent of the ethnographic dogmas that were developed early this century. Characteristic of these representations of socio-political organisation in Maori society is the manner in which the components of the model and their internal relationships are interpreted and understood, both by European scholars and in the contemporary, orthodox Maori view of their society (cf. Van Meijl 1990: ch. 2 & 3). The strict distinction between the various levels of Maori socio-political organisation as well as between various units at the same level especially, requires critical examination. Maori oral tra-
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dition, as recorded in the course of the nineteenth century, suggests that Maori society was not set in cement. From their earliest histories Maori tribes have mixed and divided and migrated and formed fresh relationships. In Maori social practice, therefore, tribal concepts may never have been as delineated as they have been represented as being in twentieth century ethnography.

The debate about the presumed demarcation of Maori tribal organisations was, to some extent, anticipated by Fortes (1959:210), who argued that the hapuu could not be termed a ‘descent-group’, as Firth had suggested, since in the conditions of ambilateral affiliation it was not closed by virtue of a descent rule alone. A positive claim to membership of the hapuu could only be validated by residence on its territory, contact with the group and participation in its daily activities. Besides primary allegiance secondary ties could be maintained by frequent and long visits to the other group. If not validated, claims to a second hapuu eventually expired after three or four generations. Indeed, ambilateral affiliation and ambilineal descent permit a certain ambiguity which raises questions about the practical relevance of the concept of hapuu which is chiefly based on an abstract ideology of descent. 9

Since the existence of hapuu was historically legitimized through an ideology of optative descent whose consequences for social practice were largely contingent, Webster (1975:143) introduced the distinction between the hapuu as a descent group residing in one community, and the hapuu as a descent category, which is based on genealogical criteria only and includes all non-resident members. He emphasized that the principle of ambilinal descent entailed that all those with an option for affiliation to a hapuu were only united in an abstract portrayal of the tribal organisation, while its core settlement was diluted by the presence of affines which were situationally involved. Nobody who qualified for membership was explicitly excluded in the ideological representation of the hapuu, while the kin relationships with those involved in the practical operation of the residential core of the hapuu tended to be included. In these circumstances, with the potential for an unrestricted expansion of tribal groups, one can indeed wonder about the practical relevance of the theoretically delineated and restrictive concept of hapuu in the organisation of Maori society.

HISTORICIZING THE MODEL OF MAORI SOCIAL STRUCTURE

The third, most serious and as yet unresolved problem with the model of Maori socio-political organisation concerns the reification of Maori tribal organisations and their representation as timeless, which, in turn, has justified their sheer unlimited projection into the past. By the same token, the timelessness of Maori socio-political organisation in Firth’s perspective continues to validate the view that Maori tribal organisations have remained largely unchanged in the course of this century. 10 Although Firth did examine changes in Maori society resulting from contact with European settler society in the final chapter of his dissertation, which was even expanded in the second edition of his book (cf. note 6), he did not situate his analysis of Maori economics and related socio-political aspects in a historical perspective. Instead, Firth sketched an abstract ideal type of the traditional order of Maori society which, in spite of some changes resulting from contact with European society, appeared generally immutable. Thus, he portrayed Maori socio-political organisation as rather static, as timeless (Metge 1990:58).

The elementary aspects of Firth’s exposition of the structure of Maori tribal organisation and his analytical distinction between whaanau, hapuu, iwi and waka might still be relevant for the study of Maori socio-political practices, past and present. At the same time, however, it should be realised that Firth’s account was based entirely on sources dating from the late nineteenth century and the early twentieth century. For
that reason, too, his rudimentary outline of the traditional socio-political organisation of Maori society should have been qualified by correlation with contemporary descriptions of Maori post-colonial practices. It would at least have prevented the perpetuation of his model of Maori socio-political organisation into the present as well as its projection into the pre-colonial past.

Obviously, a reconstruction of the tribal structure of Maori society as it operated before the arrival of James Cook in 1769 is a hazardous enterprise. Most sources date from at least five decades later, while sources regarding social and political aspects of Maori society usually date from the second half of the nineteenth century. During the initial stage of colonial contact travellers, explorers, missionaries and others describing Maori life focussed on aspects of material culture, agriculture, fishing and other mundane activities. After 1840, however, when the European population of New Zealand outnumbered the Maori and when the society of colonial settlers stabilised, the everyday practices of the Maori were no longer as novel to the immigrants living in New Zealand as they had been to the first explorers and travellers. In consequence, a shift in emphasis of Maori ethnography became noticeable.

During the second half of the nineteenth century many ‘collectors’ of Maori culture and history became obsessed with the idea that the Maori ‘race’ was doomed to extinction in the near future. This view was often substantiated by citing Darwin’s evolutionary theory: the vanishing of the Maori was believed to be an inevitable result of natural selection following the advance of European civilization (Howe 1977: 140, 142). Presently, however, it is widely accepted that the size of the Maori population was approaching an absolute low through the loss of land following the New Zealand Wars in the 1860s. The wars and subsequent land confiscations caused famine, widespread epidemics and a fundamental dislocation and demoralisation of the Maori (Sorrenson 1956). The general despondency marking this period generated a special interest in Maori art and culture among European art collectors and ethnographers (Neich 1993, Van Meijl n.d.). If the Maori people were dying out, so they believed, Maori culture must soon die out as well. This stimulated them to make an effort to document Maori society in all aspects, in particular those which had been neglected during the early stage of contact, such as religion, cultural customs and aspects of tribal organisation and history.

In this period the most important event affecting the future development of Maori ethnography was the commencement of full-time fieldwork in the Ureweras on the North Island by Elsdon Best. This self-trained ethnographer believed he had an obligation to compile and preserve a permanent record of Maori customs and traditions before they were displaced as a result of the structural anchorage of European society in New Zealand. Best deliberately opted to settle in the interior East Coast area where the Tuhoe Maori, who had been on the fringes of European influence for over a hundred years, were one of the last groups in the North Island to have direct European contact: their isolation ended with the construction of roads in 1892. He was prompted to retreat among the Tuhoe Maori by Percy Smith who with Best believed that this was the only area where traditional Maori society could still be documented in authentic form (Craig 1964: 54-5, passim).

After fifteen years of residence and research among the Tuhoe Maori, Best left the Ureweras for the Dominion Museum in Wellington, where a position as ethnologist was created especially for him after intense lobbying by Percy Smith and Peter Buck. Thus, in 1910 Best became New Zealand’s first professional ethnographer. By that time the Maori had in his view become so Europeanised, and so many of the elders who had been such valuable informants had died, that full-scale field work could no longer be expected to provide information about pre-European Maori society. Subsequently, Best published the bulk of his extensive notes in a voluminous series of Dominion Museum
Bulletins, articles in *The Journal of the Polynesian Society* and other publications during the years 1912 to 1929. The most important theme of these publications concerns his effort to describe, as one of his books was titled, *The Maori As He Was* (1924) before Europeans changed the Maori way of life. Unlike the earliest visitors to New Zealand who were content merely to describe contemporary Maori society, Best attempted to reconstruct pre-European Maori society (Groube 1985: 27). Since Firth and most other prominent students of Maori culture and history, such as Peter Buck and Maharaia Winiata, relied heavily upon Best’s data in their reflections on ‘classic’ Maori society, it is imperative to examine the trustworthiness and value of his research. Unfortunately, however, a critical, contextual and historical analysis of Best’s ethnographic publications is as yet unavailable. Apart from Craig’s (1964) idolatrous, unfactual and uncritical biography there are no published sources that aim at assessing the value of Best’s work for ethnohistorical research of Maori society. It is beyond the scope of this article to provide a comprehensive evaluation of Best, but some preliminary remarks are indispensable.

The value of Best’s oeuvre must be assessed in the light of two important facts. In the first place, it should be realised that the Urewera area was fairly atypical compared to other Maori regions. The economy of the Tuhoe Maori was not only mainly non-agricultural, but even fishing did not occur in the region. Since Maori people in other areas of New Zealand sustained a living predominantly by fishing and farming, it is ironic that through Best’s efforts the ethnography of late nineteenth century Maori society is chiefly based on field research in an area where neither could be practised and where people lived instead on hunting and gathering in the ‘bush’. The only means of assessing Best’s ethnographic accounts and interpretations is by a detailed comparison with the earliest accounts, but all of these are of coastal people making every comparative study by definition rather problematic (Groube 1985: 30-1). Indeed, since archaeological research over the past three decades has unearthed immense regional variations in prehistoric Maori society, Best’s generalisations of his findings among the Tuhoe to Maori society at large can no longer be upheld.

The second proviso regarding Best’s research concerns not only Maori economy, but affects the interpretation of Maori society in all its dimensions. Best conducted his fieldwork in the Ureweras relatively late and it might be assumed that over 120 years of colonial contact tremendous changes had occurred in Maori society. Consequently, it must be taken into account that the information presented as applying to the prehistoric period was obtained from third-generation descendants from contemporaries rather than from direct observation (*ibid.* 30). Although the Urewera country had been outside the main areas of direct European influence, the indirect influence must have been nearly as great as in other areas such as the Waikato and Taranaki, where direct European contact occurred relatively late, that is post 1820, but which at that stage had already been affected in every aspect by European settlement in Northland (Howe 1973). By the same token, the introduction of new tools, food and other goods by the exchange partners of the Tuhoe Maori is bound to have influenced Tuhoe society just as intensely by the time Best commenced his ethnographic expeditions in the Ureweras.

Related to the rather naive belief in the temporal and spatial isolation of the Tuhoe Maori is the basic assumption in Best’s publications that traditional Maori society had remained unchanged since the time of discovery and settlement of Aotearoa, at least five hundred years before the arrival of Europeans. From his point of view change had only commenced with the advent of European missionaries and settlers in the early nineteenth century. Concomitantly, Best did not hesitate to present his reconstruction of the pattern of traditional Maori tribal organisations as rather static — as was the practice until quite recently. The dynamics of Maori socio-political organisation were supposed to be chiefly external rather than internal. It is this assumption which also
characterizes the monumental work of Firth, who in some sense was as much a student of Best as he was later to be of Malinowski (cf. Groube 1985: 31).

Firth was trained as an economist at Auckland University College and switched to anthropology only after he arrived at the London School of Economics, where he studied Best’s writings for his doctorate on Maori economy. He probably didn’t meet Best personally until after he had finished his doctoral degree when he passed through Wellington on the way to his first fieldwork in Tikopia (Craig 1964: 217). In his dissertation Firth drew on a wide range of sources, including the works of Colenso, Grey, Gudgeon, Stack and Wohlers, but none of them was more important to him than the writings of Elsdon Best.

Firth’s analysis of ‘traditional’ Maori society was to a large extent based on data derived from Best’s publications, while he also adopted many of his theoretical assumptions (Ralston 1992: 178). Firth might courteously have circumvented Best’s racial assumptions, for instance about the Aryan origin of the Maori (Best 1941 [1924], I: 339)13, but he was uncritical of Best’s evolutionary framework and the assumption of a rigorous rupture between pre- and post-European Maori society, between tradition and modernity. Firth (1959 [1929]: 484-91), too, considered Maori and European society as mutually exclusive, and perceived of change as the gradual replacement of all aspects of Maori society by those of European settler society. According to his perspective on change, too, history occurs in one direction only, and it inevitably involves declining traditionality and rising modernity, a view which colonial experiences in the nineteenth century seemed to have confirmed. Thus, Firth, following Best, disregarded the internal dynamics of Maori socio-political structure. Furthermore, he overlooked the historical circumstances in which Best’s data had been collected, and, consequently, bypassed the fact that the ideal type of the traditional order of Maori society had been substantially reinforced after the initial expansion of colonial contacts. In question here is not the rudimentary, abstract form of Maori socio-political organisation, but its historical emergence in the pre-colonial era and its reinforcement in post-colonial times. A historical reconstruction on the basis of more recent archaeological research findings will illustrate the point.

THE MAKING OF THE MAORI

Nowadays there exists widespread agreement on the fact that the society opened up for the Old World by Tasman and Cook, was markedly different from the one in the making shortly after the arrival of the Maori in New Zealand, at least from about 800.14 As mentioned above, questions about the whence of the Maori people have never been unambiguously resolved. Strictly speaking the Maori did not come from anywhere: they became Maori after settlement on the two large islands in the southern corner of the Polynesian triangle.15 However, among linguists and archaeologists there is no doubt about the eastern Polynesian origin of the Maori.

Maori prehistory is the study of the adaptation of eastern Polynesian migrants to a new land. During the first few centuries after their arrival they explored the islands of New Zealand (Davidson 1984). In the initial phase of settlement most tools remained distinctly East Polynesian, in spite of the necessary adaptation of the tropical way of life to the much colder climate of New Zealand. Contrary to the homogeneous economies and languages of Polynesian societies in general, regional differences in the economy of prehistoric New Zealand show that the various groups of Polynesian immigrants were developing different strategies to adapt to local circumstances. Regional variations in terms of subsistence were, in turn, reflected in a number of different dialects of the Maori language. Small scale settlements along the coast, particularly of the North Island, are consistent with economic and linguistic patterns. Although extensive com-
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Communication and exchange networks are likely to have existed, Maori people apparently lived in small independent communities, each under its own authority. Archaeological evidence suggests that tribes or chiefdoms did not yet exist (Sutton 1990: 680).

It has been suggested, though, that the basic structures of social and political organisation as described by Best and later elaborated by Firth and others, were founded during the first few centuries after settlement (Davidson 1984: passim). The dwelling excavated in the Moikau Valley in south Wairarapa dating back to the twelfth century, constitutes the most important evidence to support this view (Prickett 1987). It was rectangular in plan with a partly enclosed front porch and the door left of centre facing out, thus resembling the *whare puni* ('sleeping house') or chiefly meeting-houses of later ethnographic accounts (cf. Best 1941, II: 558-92 & Firth 1926). It is important to realise, however, that most prehistoric dwellings excavated, including the so-called ‘sleeping-houses’ foreshadowing the later ancestral meeting-houses, were much smaller in size than the ones described in nineteenth century accounts (Van Meijl 1993). Archaeological evidence shows that communities tended to be of a smaller size as well (Sutton 1990: 679-80). Consequently, it might be inferred that the relevance of wider tribal connections for everyday life and the influence of chiefs and/or paramount chiefs was rather limited during the initial stage of settlement.

By the year 1500 the population had grown to the extent that previously unoccupied areas became inhabited. Vast areas of forest were cleared for horticulture and the promotion of the native fern (*pteridium aquilinum var. esculentum*), the rhizomes of which became part of the Maori staple diet. The result was a modification of the climate and a serious erosion of the topsoil, leading in turn to siltation of the waterways, with dramatic consequences for the fish and other animals. Prehistorians have characterized the massive impact on the environment as a disaster (Bellwood 1987 [1978]: 139, Thorne & Raymond 1989: 268).

As a result, New Zealand and its new population looked very different by the end of the fifteenth century. Gradually the distinctly East Polynesian artefact style of the earlier phase changed into a characteristically Maori style, most evidently illustrated by the emerging forms of wood carving. The Maori had also commenced constructing the famous *paa* or ‘strongholds’, which were strategically situated on sites which admitted an easy defence, such as hills, bluffs or terraces (Davidson 1987b).

In preceding centuries Maori people generally lived in autonomous, unprotected villages that rarely numbered more than a dozen houses. The spread of the population across the North Island, however, increased inter-tribal contacts through, for example, the extension of exchange networks and warfare. The latter, in turn, resulted in Maori settlements becoming clustered around the *paa*, to which families could flee in times of danger. *Paa* became the common locality of several extended families which belonged to the same descent-group. From the fact that *paa* became the dominant mode of settlement, it might be inferred that a second level in Maori socio-political organisation emerged at this stage. Blood ties had intensified and leadership at the level of ‘lineages’ had emerged as a result of the expansion of the population and intertribal conflict. Thus, the evolution of Maori tribal organisations probably did not begin until the fifteenth century, and inter-tribal warfare played a significant role in their emergence (Sutton 1990: 683). This hypothesis is supported by the fact that warfare also constitutes the main topic of modern tribal traditions, which are also likely to have originated in this phase of New Zealand prehistory (e.g. Kelly 1949).*

From approximately 1500 most features of Maori society as described by Cook in 1769 are clearly visible in the archaeological evidence. The evolution of Maori society did not come to a halt but the rate of change tended to slow down. The population was still increasing steadily and the settlement patterns that were established in previous centuries were reinforced in a slightly modified way. Some innovations in *paa* building

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took place (Davidson 1987a). Since regional variations of socio-political and economic organisation are in accordance with oral traditions as recorded after European contact, it can be argued that they continued to characterize Maori society during the preceding centuries as well as after it. Thus, while it seems that tribal organisations emerged before the arrival of British settlers, they remained highly localized.

In summary, a prehistoric viewpoint provides a long-term perspective on the evolution of Maori tribes or chiefdoms. It also explains that the arrival of Cook did not involve a dramatic rupture in the social and political life of a putatively stable and static Polynesian society. Rather, during the first few decades after colonial contact Europeans simply speeded up the process of change that had started many centuries before. The initial pattern of post-colonial change was in fact foreshadowed by changes in prehistoric New Zealand (Groube 1964).

This, in fact, is the argument developed in a pathbreaking M.A. thesis of 1964 by the New Zealand prehistorian Leslie Groube. He argued that initial contacts with European explorers only provided Maori society with a new stimulus for change without essentially affecting the direction of change. The validity of this hypothesis is restricted to the proto-historic period, that is, the first few decades after the arrival of Europeans when Maori people maintained full control of their society. Although external forces gradually became the dominant generators of change in Maori society as the number of European settlers in New Zealand steadily increased, during the initial period of colonial contact the forms of change were not substantially altered. Changes that were already under way in prehistoric times gathered some momentum in proto-historic times, but they did not lead Maori society into a new direction. Scattered European visitors only acted as ‘catalysts’ of a long-term process of change, for example, by introducing metal which realised a certain potential for development inherent in prehistoric Maori society, which otherwise might never have come to fruition. Thus, prehistoric changes were merely supplemented by the changes that were consequent upon European contact in the proto-historic period.

Groube’s hypothesis also applies to the evolution of tribal organisations. While they evolved in elementary form during the centuries immediately before the arrival of European settlers, their organisation did not radically alter under the new circumstances of colonial contact. In the proto-historic period the development of tribal organisations was only speeded up and reinforced, a point I shall substantiate below. Here it is important to emphasize that this view implies that the socio-political organisation of Maori society as recorded by Best and later rephrased in the form of a general, timeless model by Firth, does not characterize Maori society in its prehistoric stage. It applies, instead, to Maori society after it had been tied together and stabilised in the face of contact with ngaa tangata paakehaa, the ‘strangers’ from afar. Indeed, I argue that Firth’s model of Maori socio-political organisation, which deeply influenced New Zealand archaeologists who for long were in search of hapuu and iwi settlements, is a post-colonial construct. The evidence for this argument is contained in sources dating from the proto-historic period.

COLONIAL CONTACT AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF MAORI TRIBES

The first contacts between Europeans and New Zealand ‘natives’ were characterised by barter (Cook 1955 [1769]: 169ff). The Maori showed a particular interest in iron tools, blankets, soap and fish hooks, while they, in turn, provided food and craft goods to Cook and his crew. Cook also introduced several plants and animals, of which pigs and potatoes as well as turnips, cabbages and chickens survived and were multiplied.

Pigs and potatoes are generally mentioned as having revolutionised the Maori subsistence economy, but pigs did not become important until later. Potatoes, on the
other hand, were preserved and propagated by the Maori people, and there exists clear evidence that in the first decade of the nineteenth century vast quantities of potatoes were grown (Savage 1939 [1807]: 60-3). They were found so easy to grow that they seem to have rapidly supplanted taro and the yam.

The advantages of the potato were numerous. Potato yields were much higher than those from the indigenous tubers, and it was relatively easy to preserve them, which in turn facilitated their propagation. The potato did require a readjustment of the economic cycle, but it reduced the pressure on those based near the coast for seafood resources. According to Groube (1964: 113) the potato therefore revolutionised the Maori economy by making a fully sedentary agricultural life possible throughout New Zealand. After the introduction of the potato many paa sites were moved to river-fronts and fertile valleys, where potatoes could be produced from the land and where Maori people could trade with the first European settlers, usually missionaries.

A corollary of the changes in settlement as a result of trade and commercial agriculture was a tightening of the tribal organisation. While prehistoric settlement was based in scattered homesteads or in houses clustered together in hamlets or paa, after contact, settlement became concentrated in villages since more people were needed to work the land, which caused the bonds within (sub-)tribal groups to be strengthened, a tendency already in place in the face of the increasing number of European settlers. Thus, it can be argued that the colonial encounter drew together and reinforced the higher levels of the tribal organisation as it was recorded in the nineteenth century (cf. Cleave 1983: 60-2, Sutton 1990: 684-7).

Although the archaeological material suggests that the evolution of tribes and chiefdoms began from approximately 1500, the development of clear boundaries between different tribes and, to some extent, canoes, can only be explained as a result of colonial contact. This process has previously been explained as a result of the inter-tribal wars which broke out in the 1820s following the introduction of the musket (e.g. Lian 1987: 456; Sorrenson 1965: 26; Waitangi Tribunal 1985: 21-2), but an analysis of Maori economic developments suggests it began much earlier. In the 1820s Maori tribal organisations were already firmly in place, and the musket wars only put senior or paramount chiefs, operating at the level of iwi and in some cases waka, on the stage of inter-tribal politics for the first time in Maori history. The musket wars thus contributed to a stabilisation of Maori tribes as chiefdoms.

STABILISATION OF MAORI TRIBES AND CHIEFDOMS

The ramifications of the musket wars for the stabilisation of Maori tribal organisations and the emergence of paramount chiefs may be illustrated as follows. In the early 1820s the Maori acquired muskets in great numbers and the inter-tribal wars for such traditional reasons as utu ('return' for anything, *c.q.* revenge), soon got out of control. Even some of the missionaries engaged in musket trade, although it was forbidden by the first missionary Samuel Marsden. In the first instance Marsden himself had also distributed some muskets to favoured individuals, but when he left New Zealand after his first visit in 1815 he prohibited the missionaries from trading in muskets and even banned all private trade (Elder 1932: 139).

The most renowned warrior at the time was the chief of the northern Ngapuhi (sub-)tribes, Hongi Hika. In company with the missionary Thomas Kendall, he had visited Prince Regent, who would later be crowned King George IV, at the Carlton Palace in London in 1820 (Cowan 1910: 266). He had been loaded with gifts, such as ploughs and other tools, steel cuirasses and helmets with a golden armour. On his return journey via Sydney he heard that his son-in-law had fallen in battle, and immediately he sold all his presents from England to purchase flintlock muskets, powder and bullets. Back in
New Zealand he led over two thousand Ngapuhi warriors in campaigns to the Thames, to Waikato and even as far south as Taranaki. It was the beginning of an ongoing movement of attack and revenge.\(^22\)

The common enemies of the Ngapuhi Maori created a bond of union among the (sub-)tribes of which the saying went *Ngapuhi koowhao rau*, ‘Ngapuhi of a hundred holes’, referring to a previous lack of unity amongst the Ngapuhi Maori (Sutton 1990: 685-6). By the same token, the (sub-)tribes which they attacked were driven together in their defence against Ngapuhi, even though in the beginning internal rivalry hampered the co-ordination of (sub-)tribal war parties. Among the Waikato Maori, for example, the strife between the senior sub-tribal chiefs Te Rauparaha and Te Wherowhero forced the former to move. He formed a coalition with Ngati Toa of Kawhia and parts of Te Ati Awa and Ngati Raukawa to invade the Manawatu plains and settle there collectively (Burns 1980). Subsequently, Te Wherowhero moved against the Taranaki peoples in the 1830s after which the *rangatira* of the Ngati Mahuta sub-tribe became the uncontested *ariki* of all Waikato *hapuu*, and, to some extent, of all tribes belonging to the Tainui *waka*. While similar processes occurred in other parts of New Zealand, the coalitions that were formed between the Waikato people led by Te Wherowhero and other Tainui tribes, such as Ngati Maniapoto, Ngati Haau and Hauraki, contributed to an unprecedented political endorsement of sentimental ties between tribes whose members all descended from the crew of the same canoe, the Tainui canoe. The key role that Te Wherowhero played in the development of the coalition among tribes of the Tainui canoe would later prompt his coronation as first Maori King (Jones 1959).

The wars did not come to an end until, in the north in the 1830s, and in the south in the early 1840s, muskets and other European arms were equally distributed across all tribal regions. Only at this time the tribal organisations and their paramount chiefs, which were later recorded by Best and, subsequently, reconstituted by Firth, had settled firmly in the political arena of colonial New Zealand (Cleave 1983: 71, Sutton 1990: 686-7).

**CONCLUDING REMARKS**

The abstract prototype of Maori socio-political organisation was (re-)constructed on the basis of ethnographic data collected in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, more than a century after colonial contact began. For that reason, too, it is important to reflect on the implications of the fact that widely accepted views about the tribal organisation of Maori society and the place of chiefs therein originated in post-colonial history.

One of the distinguishing features of the standard model of Maori tribes and chiefs involves their portrayal as timeless in the context of traditional Maori society. The static representation of Maori socio-political organisation, in turn, permitted its projection into the pre-colonial era as well as its perpetuation into the present. For similar reasons, the abstract outline of Maori tribes and chiefs could become canonized in references to ‘Classic Maori Society’ as it is assumed to have existed before Cook introduced the ‘Great Book of Changes’ to the natives of the South Seas (*cf.* Sahlins 1985).

The results of archaeological research over the past 35 years, however, suggest that tribal organisations exceeding the level of extended families and forms of chieftainship corresponding with them, only emerged in the course of the fifteenth century, some 700 or more years after the Maori settled on the islands of New Zealand. The role and influence of sub-tribal and tribal chiefs during the final few centuries before the arrival of Cook is not entirely clear, but was probably limited since settlements were generally of a small scale. In spite of the astronomical number of *paa* built from the year 1500, prehistoric Maori settlements, including the fortified villages, rarely seemed to integrate
more than a few extended families tracing their descent from the same ancestor. Thus, (sub-)tribal chiefs were probably distinguished long before colonial contact, but the potential of their status did not fully develop until the early days of European settlement.

Although little concrete evidence is available concerning the precise nature of the social and political organisation of Maori society as it existed, probably in elementary form, towards the end of the eighteenth century, there exists little doubt that it expanded rapidly as well as strengthened under the influence of trade, new agricultural techniques and the intensification of inter-tribal conflicts, all as a result of the advance of colonial settlement in the beginning of the nineteenth century. The impact of colonial contact was so sweeping that it affected, whether directly or indirectly, all areas of New Zealand to such an extent that towards the end of the nineteenth century it could no longer be assumed that in remote areas Maori society could still be documented in unchanged form. Indeed, the entire notion of authenticity on which Best’s search for prehistoric purity was based, fails to take into account a perspective on change in prehistory. For that reason, too, Firth’s sketch of Maori society in all its aspects, which was entirely based on data collected in post-European conditions, is unreliable for the analysis of Maori socio-political organisation in prehistoric as well as protohistoric circumstances. While it might not be entirely useless as a point of departure for ethnohistorical research into forms of Maori socio-political organisation, it must not be taken for granted. It should be qualified by comparative, contemporary descriptions of Maori tribal organisations and the way in which they were guided by chiefs of lower or higher rank. Then, it will become apparent that Maori society is so dynamic that the uncritical application of strict models might hamper analysis rather than clarify.

The implications of this ethnohistorical deconstruction of the standard model of Maori socio-political organisation are, of course, far-reaching, not only for the archaeological study of Maori society in pre-colonial circumstances, but also for the examination of the continuing development of Maori tribes and chieftainship since Firth published his dissertation in the late 1920s. It is remarkable that in the twentieth century very few empirical studies have been conducted into the socio-political organisation of contemporary Maori society. The small number of critical publications on the dynamics of contemporary Maori tribal organisation and Maori chieftainship23 is particularly remarkable since the urbanisation of Maori society over the past fifty years, with currently at least 70% of the Maori population living in an urban or semi-urban environment, provides sufficient reason to presume that Maori tribes and chieftainship have been fundamentally reformed over the past fifty years. Anthropologists, however, have by and large adopted Firth’s model in their studies and consequently rediscovered the main categories as defined by him and his followers, notably Buck and Winiata. Reinterpretations on the basis of recent archaeological research into the dynamics of Maori socio-political organisation in the past make it, nevertheless, plausible that Maori ‘canoes’, ‘tribes’, ‘sub-tribes’, and ‘extended families’ have developed and changed over the last few decades just as they changed before and after the arrival of the first European settlers. The ethnographic analysis of the precise nature of these changes ought to be put high on the research agenda for the future, in order to ensure that anthropology finally discards its continuing search for so-called ‘authentic’ forms of socio-political organisation and other aspects of Maori culture. Instead, anthropology needs to seek the dynamics of change and to legitimise cultures as they are, not in some mythic, primordial purity.
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NOTES

1. See also the enlarged and mostly rewritten edition of 1904.
2. It was, for example, integrated in the first important book on New Zealand archaeology (Duff 1977 [1950]).
3. For an excellent introduction into New Zealand prehistory, see Davidson (1984)
5. Recently a similar argument was put forward by the New Zealand archaeologist Douglas Sutton (1990). However, Sutton is mainly concerned with providing the evidence to substantiate the proposition that was first put forward by Groube (1964), while I focus my analysis on the implications of the archaeological discussion for Maori ethnography through a critique of Firth (1959 [1929]) and a historicization of anthropological concepts concerning Maori socio-political organisation.
6. In this article I refer to the second, revised edition of Firth’s dissertation, published in 1959 under a new title in which the by then pejorative predicate primitive had been excised: Economics of the New Zealand Maori. The second edition of Firth’s PhD thesis is by and large a reprint of the 1929 text, except that the chapter on ‘Native Tracks and Canoe-Ways’ has been omitted, while chapter 1 on ‘The Study of Economic Anthropology’ (previously ‘Primitive Economics’) has been thoroughly revised and the penultimate chapter on ‘The Economic Aspect of Culture Change’ has been significantly extended.
7. The use of the concept of ‘clan’ in relation to Maori hapuu will be discussed below.
8. Firth did not elaborate on the distinction between politico-economic and social functions of iwi, but the increasing importance of land following the wars of the 1820s and the alienation of land by European settlers probably contributed to his putting iwi at the core of his model (see below).
9. Firth (1963: 36) and Scheffler (1964: 131) argued against Fortes that, because Maori hapuu were corporate groups united primarily on the basis of common ancestry and accomplishing various social, cultural, political and economic functions, they were descent-groups in the full sense of the term. However, Firth and Scheffler refrained from considering the practical consequences of the concept of hapuu being based purely on an abstract ideology of descent.
10. Compare, for example, the report by the Ministerial Advisory Committee on a Maori Perspective for the Department of Social Welfare (1986).
11. See Craig (1964: 231-38) for a list of Best’s publications.
13. See also Sorrenson (1979: 30).
14. At present the orthodox view still holds that New Zealand was settled from about 800, but archaeologists have started to re-examine the evidence and it has already been suggested that New Zealand was probably settled between 0 and 500 (McLeod 1988).
15. The words are borrowed from Davidson (1984: 20) who paraphrases Leslie Groube.
16. Evidence of prehistoric warfare, nevertheless, is rather patchy and I have argued elsewhere that in spite of the estimate of 4000 to 6000 fortifications, it has been too easily inferred that the Maori people were continuously fighting. The image of the Maori as warriors cannot be seen in isolation from New Zealand’s colonial history. Paradoxically, however, it has been incorporated in Maori forms of self-representation and thus lingers on in contemporary discourses, e.g. in the best-selling novel Once Were Warriors by Alan Duff and Lee Tamahori’s film made after it under the same title (Van Meijl 1994).
17. At the national, pan-tribal level colonial interaction brought about the abstractions: Maori and Pakeha people. Around 1800 the word maori was first recorded as an adjective of taungata, meaning ‘usual’, ‘ordinary’ or ‘normal’ ‘people’. Only from the 1830s has the word Maori been used as a noun. From then on Europeans were referred to as Pakeha, derived from the adjective pakehaa, meaning ‘foreign’ (Williams 1971 [1844]: 252).
18. It is interesting to note, for example, that 24 years after Cook had introduced pigs into New Zealand,
they were unknown in the area where he had bartered them (McNab 1914: 88). Best (1930: 353; 1931: 19) pointed out that pigs were not valued as highly as other food resources, since they necessitated the fenc­ing of cultivation grounds and thus demanded additional labour.

19. The first potatoes are said to have been introduced into New Zealand by the French explorer Jean de Surville, but it is not clear whether they were planted (Best 1925 [1976]: 279; 1931: 19). Crozet’s account (1891) shows that in 1772 Marion du Fresne certainly planted potatoes as well as wheat, maize, and various kinds of nuts. Cook does not mention potatoes in the journal he kept during his first voyage, but on his fourth visit, during his second voyage, he planted potatoes, beans, peas and corn at Queen Charlotte Sound.


21. For a discussion of various explanations of the inter-tribal wars of the early nineteenth century, especially the impact they had on the colonial representation of the Maori as warriors, see Van Meijl (1994). Smith (1910b) provides an account of the oral history of the inter-tribal wars of the 1820s.

23. Notable exceptions are Metge (1964, 1990) and Webster (1975).

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