On the Probable Origin of the Maoris or Native Inhabitants of New Zealand

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JANUARY 11TH, 1876.

A. W. FRANKS, Esq., F.R.S., *Vice-President, in the Chair.*

The minutes of the previous meeting were confirmed.

The Director announced the following new elections:—
W. R. CORNISH, Esq., 5, Sunderland Terrace, Bayswater ;
ISIDORE B. LYONS, Esq., 9, Finsbury Place, E.C. ; H. AUBREY
HUSBAND, Esq., M.D., of Brentwood House, Stroud Green
Road, Finsbury Park, N. ; and EDMUND CROGGAN, Esq., Beau-
fort House, Beaufort Road, Clifton.

The list of presents was read, and thanks were voted to the
respective donors, viz. :—

FOR THE LIBRARY.

From the AUTHOR.—The Mythology and Traditions of the Maori
in New Zealand. By Rev. J. F. H. Wohlers.

From the AUTHOR.—Kashmir and Kashghar. By H. W. Bellew,
Esq., C.S.I.

From the "ACADEMY."—Bulletin de la Académie Royale de Copen-
hagen. No. 3, 1874 ; No. 1, 1875.

From the SOCIETY.—Proceedings of the Royal Society. Vol. XXIV.
No. 164.

From the EDITOR.—Revue Scientifique. Nos. 25—28, 1875.

From the SOCIETY OF ARTS AND SCIENCES OF BATAVIA.—Tijdsch-
rift xxi. afl. 5, 6 ; do. xxii. afl. 4, 5, 6—xxiii. afl. 1. Notulen
xii. No. 4, 1874. xiii. Nos. 1, 2, 1875. Verhandelingen,
xxxvii. xxxviii.

From F. W. RUDLER, Esq.—The Marriage of Near Kin. By A. H.
Huth, Esq.

From the ASSOCIATION.—Proceedings of the Geologists' Associa-
tion. Vol. IV. No. 5.

From the SOCIETY.—Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great
Britain and Ireland. Vol. VIII. Part I.

From the EDITOR.—Nature (to date).

The following paper was read by the author :—

*On the PROBABLE ORIGIN of the MAORIS or NATIVE INHABI-
TANTS of NEW ZEALAND.* By W. S. W. VAUX, M.A., F.R.S.

It has been long a problem, and, I may add, one not yet satis-
factorily solved, whether the Maoris are autochthonous, and if
not, what was the country whence they originally came ?
Much speculation has arisen on this subject, not, perhaps,
always of the wisest kind, and many theories have been ad-
vanced which, on more careful investigation, cannot be sustained,

As I have been induced by my friend, Dr. Hector, to take much interest in this question, and to look into it with some minuteness, especially from the language point of view, he has asked me to accompany his remarks on the stone implements he has brought from New Zealand with a short preface, stating the judgment my researches have led me to form on the "whence" of the Maoris. I propose, however, that this brief paper shall be, in the strictest sense, a preface to what is to follow from him, as to go into details on so wide a subject would require even more than one long evening. Moreover, the Society would, I feel sure, prefer hearing, from Dr. Hector's own lips, his account of the stone implements he has to show, with the views of their relative dates and uses, which appear to him, from his long and practical experience of the habits of the existing population, to be the most likely.

I shall not, therefore, now discuss these remains, and shall merely add the *one* remark, that I doubt the possibility of deducing any conclusion as to the remote or recent origin of the Maoris from any such monuments, the more so, that both of the two great classes, the rude as well as the highly polished, are met with, at least occasionally, side by side, under the same conditions, in the same old native camping-grounds or settlements, this fact, as it seems to me, clearly showing that they must have been in use, synchronously, by one and the same people. That they were used for very different purposes is equally certain from their wholly different character and conformation. I shall, therefore, confine myself to some other points which are, perhaps, rather more in my province, and shall, thus, be less likely to anticipate what Dr. Hector may presently have to say.

Now, it seems to me that there are *three* sources from which we might hope to gain some information as to the origin of the Maoris, viz. :—

1. Their traditions.
2. Their ethnology and customs.
3. Their language.

To take, *first*, the *Native Traditions*. On this head it is enough for me to state here, that, among these, there is a very general and remarkable uniformity, pointing to this definite conclusion, that, according to their beliefs, their ancestors came from the N. and N.E., and but few at a time, the names of even some of the canoes in which they arrived having been preserved. It is, further, a curious fact that there are still existing families in the islands who put forward a claim, not contradicted by the others, that they are lineal descendants of the first-comers. The most common name they give their primeval home is Hawaiki, a name found variously modified in

more than one of the islands of the Polynesian group,* the natural inference from this fact being that it belongs to some remote place, possibly that of their earliest origin, and has, thus, been handed on from island to island. I may add that, according to a persistent tradition, resting, as in the similar case of Owhyhee, on the genealogies of the families of known chiefs, the Maoris would not seem to have occupied these islands much more than 500 years; and, further, that there is no evidence whatever for the idea, propounded by Mr. Colenso and others in the Transactions of the New Zealand Institute, that any other race occupied these islands before their arrival here. No remains have been found, during the ample investigations of recent years, giving any colour to this notion, nor have the closest observers detected the prevalence of any custom, which might have served to distinguish the Maori of 500 years ago from those of the present day, still less, either of these peoples, from the earlier but hypothetical race who, if they had lived in New Zealand, need not, for this reason, have been the ancestors of the present Maoris.

I cannot, of course, in so elementary a paper as the present, presume to offer any *proofs* of what I myself firmly hold, viz. the almost certain truth of the Maori traditions, the more so that, in the lecture which is to follow, Dr. Hector will no doubt refer to them, and with an authority to which I have no claim. I may, however, state that, so far as I have been able to examine into them, I think the evidence in their favour conclusive. I pass, therefore, on to the *second* portion of this paper,

The Ethnology and Customs of the Maoris.

And, here, I am bound to admit that, at first sight, there is a considerable difficulty, if we are compelled to hold that the colour of skin, the outline of features, or the nature of the hair are, in themselves, enough to constitute a well defined variety of the *genus homo*, for, unquestionably, in external appearance, there is among the Maoris the widest diversity of features, some of

* It seems worth while to note the curious modifications of form under which this name is found. Thus in Cook, 1 Voy. iii. p. 69, we find it called *Heawige*, evidently an error of English origin. In the islands themselves the following forms occur:—1. *New Zealand*—Hawaiki; 2. *Rarotonga* and *Maugarwan*—Avaiki; Tahiti, Hawaii; Sandwich, Hawaii (the native name of the island we call "Owhyhee"); Marquesas (like the New Zealand Hawaiki); Samoan, Savaii. It is quite clear that each and all these forms are dialectical variations of some one original, but what that original was we do not know, perhaps never shall ascertain. It is a curious fact that in many of these islands the word simply means "below," corresponding with the *inferno* of other countries, the idea of the people clearly being, as is expressed in several of the legends, that their chief god fished them up from the bottom of the ocean and thus made their homes dry land.

them being almost European in their physiognomy, while others, again, have the high forehead and Roman nose of the North American Indian. There is also an almost equal diversity of colour from the darkest swarthiness to the fair types of the European. All and each of these points may be well seen in some photographs Dr. Hector has collected, in illustration of part of his lecture. Hence it is not strange that Dr. Höchstetter and others should have called the existing natives a *mixed* race, and should have strongly urged the probability that there has been, at some period or other, a considerable infusion of Melanesian blood. To this view, however, I venture to think that the perfect unity of the Maori language is an adequate reply; for though, as might have been anticipated, there are many dialectical differences between the speech of the various tribes dwelling from the north to the south promontories (over a distance of some 13 degrees of latitude), the *common* language of the Maoris, which is better known and has been more carefully studied, than that of any other of the Pacific Islanders, with the possible exception of the Hawaiian, is perfectly homogeneous, with scarcely any words (and these chiefly the import of commerce) assignable to any other tongue. Mr. Thomson has, I think, detected only about 100 words, Malay or of Malay origin, out of the 6,000 to be found in the latest New Zealand dictionary, a dictionary, however, which, it is no injustice to its compilers to state, is far enough from being a thesaurus of the language. Judging by the examples I have seen, there is not nearly as much difference between these local dialects as we find, at the present moment, between the speech of a Yorkshire or a Somersetshire man. Now it would seem scarcely possible, certainly not probable, that, supposing the Maoris the *mixed* race they have been asserted by some to be, not one single word of any other people, except the few Malay words I have referred to, should be found in their current spoken language. Few instances occur of the intermixing of two or more *wholly unlettered* populations, whether by conquest or otherwise, without many words having been preserved belonging, respectively, to the conquered or the conquering peoples.

With regard to their *customs*, I think it may be stated that, with the exception of the cava-drinking, of which we read so much in Mariner's "Tonga Islands," those of the Maoris differ but little from what we find prevailing in the other Polynesian groups—such as the Navigator's, Friendly, Society, Marquesas, and Sandwich Islands—the natural conclusion being, that the inhabitants of New Zealand and the islands I have just mentioned were, at some time or other, much more directly connected

than they are at present; and this conclusion, it will be observed, is wholly in unison with the tradition of the Maori immigration from the N.E. Again, in all, or nearly all of these islands we find the recognition of one or more superior beings, not without some resemblance to the deified heroes of classical antiquity, together with the prevalence, at least formerly, of human sacrifices, infanticide, and cannibalism, the practice of tattoo, and the institution of tabu. In some of the islands, and markedly in New Zealand, there is a total absence of images and of any edifice that could be called a temple, and in most of them, with the exception of New Zealand, their Paradise is supposed to be in a remote island to the N.W.

I learn from Dr. Hector that the Maoris excel greatly in the practice of weaving, that their practice in this art is exceedingly ingenious and peculiar, that they show much taste and skill in the patterns of the cloths they produce; and that the art of carving in wood, for which these islanders are justly famed, is confined to a certain class, and handed down from father to son. I learn, too, that it is usual, when any peculiarly good work is required, to send from one end of the island to another to secure the services of some of the tohungas or skilled artificers, who are themselves, individually, well known.

It would be of great interest could we trace on the continent of Asia, or in the adjacent islands, any manufactured work nearly resembling that of New Zealand, and for this purpose I studied, so far as I was able, the interesting collection now in the India Museum at South Kensington. I regret, however, possibly from my own negligence or defect of eyesight, that I did not detect any specimens from India or the Indian Archipelago exhibiting an accurate resemblance to the work we are entitled to attribute to the native inhabitants of New Zealand. It is, however, extremely difficult to feel sure about the *provenance* of individual objects, and I am, therefore, quite prepared to learn that I passed over, from ignorance, some objects about which I ought to have had no doubt. There is, however, one custom common to many of the other islanders which we do not find among the Maoris, and this is the use of bows and arrows. In New Zealand bows and arrows are not used as weapons of offence and defence, or employed for war purposes, though, as we know from recent fatal examples, they are common enough to the N.W. among the Melanesian and Micronesian populations.

In the *third* portion of this paper, *the Language of the Maoris*, and, on the amount of affinity it has been said by many writers to have with the dialects of other islands in the

Pacific, I am able to speak with considerable certainty, having devoted all the time I could spare, during the last six months, to the study of the leading languages of Polynesia, the Maori, Tonga, Tahiti, and Hawaii, with reference, when I had the opportunity, to the works of William v. Humboldt, Buschmann, Moerenhout, and other travellers.

In this inquiry it is right that I should mention that Mr. Thomson, of Otago, to whom I have already referred, has, three or four years since, instituted many interesting and successful comparisons between the Maori, Malagasi, Tongan, and Malay, respectively, and has published the results at which he has arrived in an able paper in the sixth volume of the "Transactions of the New Zealand Institute, 1873."

The general conclusion I have formed from these studies (and it is obviously not possible for me to give on this occasion either proofs or details) is that all the languages of Polynesia, with the exception of the Tongan and the Fiji (or Viti, as it is more correctly called), are closely connected, both in structure and vocabulary; and, further, that the differences exhibited by the Tongan and Viti, due in each case, I suspect, to Melanesian influences, are, nevertheless, not such, as to exclude them from being *bonâ fide* Polynesian. And secondly, that there is, in each of them, a certain connection with the Malay and Javanese groups of languages, but by no means so intimate a connection as many able philologists have asserted. I think, therefore, that there is no doubt but there once was a distinct Polynesian language, and that this language, in the course of things, and, after the lapse of a period of time we have no data whatever for calculating, has been broken up and left as we find it now in the different groups of the Pacific Islands which I have mentioned.

It will be observed that, if this theory be true, the question as to the "whence" of the Maoris is largely widened out; for, in the face of the close resemblances, any student of comparative manners or of comparative philology will find in each and all of these islands, it is, practically impossible to produce any satisfactory evidence, to show that what is prehistoric in one of them is not equally so in all the rest.* In fact, the question really becomes this, What is the origin of the Polynesians? It is clear that we cannot isolate Hawaiian, Tahitian,

* It has, I am aware, been a favourite view of several writers that the respective antiquity of the different groups on the islands they now inhabit can be shown from the character of their present alphabets, and it has been supposed that, as those to the N.E. and extreme E. of the Pacific—the dwellers, for instance, in the Sandwich Islands or Easter Island—have fewer consonants in their language than the Samoans or the Maoris to the W., the eastern people must, on the theory of the whole of the Polynesians having immigrated

or Maori, though it is probable that the modification these dialects have undergone, and possibly, too, the marked varieties now noticeable in their physical features, suggest the intervention of a very long period of time since the ancestors (whoever they were) common to *all* these peoples dwelt together side by side.

Now, we know that the Polynesians belong, wholly, to that division of mankind who are termed the "yellow men," as distinguished from the "white," or so-called Caucasian races, and the "black," or Negro and Melanesian; moreover, that, physically, they are evidently far superior to either Melanesian or Micronesian. Their prevailing tint is light to dusky brown, with a tinge of yellow, though, as I have said, many of the New Zealanders, and a large proportion of the Sandwich Islanders, are very dark. Still there is scarcely found among them the woolly or crisp hair universally associated with the negro, nor, except rarely, the long, lank hair, the prevailing type of the Malay populations. I ought to add that one of the leading characteristics of all true Polynesians (and in this they stand in marked contrast to the black races) is their love of wandering and of navigating. Many well known and recent instances can be adduced of canoes found in the open sea more than 1,500 miles from the islands whence they had started, and, yet, the occupants of these canoes were not starving, nor, apparently, in any distress.

Now, the leading races of yellow men in Asia are the Turanian Mongols, and I confess, therefore, I think the view I have just sketched out fairly points to a descent of the island populations we now call Polynesian, at some remote period, from the great plains of Central Asia, where still dwell great numbers of a similar type of people. It is quite reasonable to suppose that the necessities of an over-population, or some other agency we cannot now trace, which, in prehistoric times, urged the same people westwards to overrun some of the fairest lands of Eastern Europe, may have induced others of them, either before or afterwards, to force their way to the eastern shores of the Pacific Ocean. Indeed, for such a descent, Nature has herself provided the way; for what better course could be found for the onward march of nations than such great streams, as the Brahmaputra, the Irrawaddy, the rivers of Siam and Canton, and more than all, the mighty Yang-tze and Hoangho? The greater of these

from Asia, have been the first to arrive where they are now, and must, therefore, be the oldest inhabitants of Polynesia. Now, though it is quite true that many dialectical forms still surviving in the W. are not found in the E., and also that the mythology of the W. is comparatively simple and spiritual, while that of the E. is debased and cruel, I cannot say that I am prepared at present to accept either of these views as conclusive as the relative antiquity of the different islanders.

streams ascend into the heart of Asia to the very homes and centres of the Mongolian population, while the lands along much of their course is known to be richly fertile. If we conceive, what was probably the case, a series of waves of emigration, at considerable intervals of time and by different rivers, there is no difficulty in supposing that, when the different groups of emigrants met again a long period afterwards, after having traversed thousands of miles of ocean from their original homes, they would not recognise one another as families who had been once akin. Unlettered populations would not draw the inferences as to origins and ancestries, which are easily discerned by the comparative philologists of Europe.

I believe, therefore, that some such theory as this is sufficient to account for the substantial unity of all the Polynesian dialects, and to account also for the proportion of Malay words and forms detected in some of them. I cannot admit that these languages are *derived* from the Malay, but it is, on the other hand, not improbable that the tribes we now call Malays, descending, originally, also, from Central Asia, did follow the S.E. line of the Brahmaputra, Irrawaddy, &c., while the larger bodies of the Polynesians followed the course of Chinese rivers, at a period long anterior to the Malay descent, gradually crossing the Pacific by the stepping-stones of the innumerable islands to be found between the 20th and 25th parallels of N. latitude. Nearer than this I fear we have little chance of getting.

On CERTAIN EARLY FORMS of STONE IMPLEMENTS in use among the INHABITANTS of NEW ZEALAND. By JAMES HECTOR, M.D., C.M.G., F.R.S.

DR. HECTOR, before describing the collection of New Zealand and Chatham Island Stone Implements, which he exhibited, referred to some points in the ethnography of the Maori race not mentioned in the foregoing paper. He dismissed as untenable the theory that some persons advanced, of the Maoris being autochthones, or a remnant of a former race now represented by isolated groups, through the submergence of a great continental area, and expressed his acquiescence with Mr. Vaux respecting the origin of the Maoris as migrants in common with other Polynesians, but thought that this general way of dealing with the subject rather avoided than settled the issue of greatest interest to the New Zealand student, which is the period of the first settlement of the islands by Maoris, and whether the whole Maori population had a common origin from one migration.