

ART. XVIII.—*Maori Place-names: with Special Reference to the Great Lakes and Mountains of the South Island.*

By J. COWAN.

[Read before the Wellington Philosophical Society, 4th October, 1905.]

IN this paper I do not propose to enter at length upon the large question of Maori nomenclature, about which so much has been written, but simply to note some hitherto unrecorded names of interest in the South Island, more particularly those of the lakes and mountains, which I have from Maori sources. During the last few years attention has been many times directed to the desirability of preserving Maori place-names wherever possible, and to the necessity for fixing the correct orthography of many of the Native names at present spelled in a more or less inaccurate fashion. We have a good many cases of carelessly spelled names in and around Wellington—even the Native names of some of the streets are incorrect—but there is no reason why this sort of thing should be perpetuated. In the South Island, however, matters are much worse. I could give a list of many scores of names of localities in the Island—towns, villages, railway-stations, rivers, lakes, and mountains—all erroneously spelt, many of them atrociously mangled by the *pakeha*. Those present who are acquainted with Maori will no doubt be able to recall many mistakes of this sort. One glaring instance is typical of the careless method of orthography common throughout the South Island. “Kurow” (locally pronounced as “Kew-ro”) is the official name of a township and railway-station in north Otago. This, as it stands, is neither Maori, English, nor Japanese. As a matter of fact it should be “Kohu-rau,” which means “many mists,” or “roofed with mists”—the name of a mountain near the township. There is something appropriate and poetic in the name “Kohu-rau”; but I suppose “Kurow” it will be henceforth and always.

A great many of the names given to mountains and lakes in the South Island are personal names. The Maoris bestowed the names of their chiefs upon prominent features of the landscape, just as we *pakehas* name them after our early explorers, and our statesmen, and other men of note. The attempts made to interpret these names under the mistaken idea that they are locally descriptive titles have led to some curious and amusing blunders. Other names, again, are tritely appropriate to the locality. Many others are exceedingly interesting because they memorise the ancient homes of the Maori in the South Sea

Islands—they are importations from Hawaiiki, and are of great assistance to Polynesian scholars in tracing with exactness the olden homes of our Native race in the Society Islands and the Cook Group. The Maori is as fond as the Anglo-Saxon and the Celt of taking his home-names with him across the sea. Names of this class are: "Rarotonga" (Centre Island, in Foveaux Strait); "Arowhenua" or "Arowhena," near Temuka; "Motutapu," "Aorangi," "Arahura," "Takitimu," "Hikuraki," &c. The name "Arahura" (the greenstone-bearing river near Hokitika, on the West Coast) is in itself a most interesting reminiscence of Hawaiiki—a story in a word. It is identical with "Ara'ura," the former and classic name of Aitutaki, in the Cook Islands—the group to which Rarotonga also belongs. Many years ago I had occasion, in the course of newspaper work, to board a small Native-owned schooner while she was beating up into Auckland Harbour with a cargo of oranges from Aitutaki. She had been wrecked at that island, refloated by the Natives, and renamed by them the "Ara'ura," which I learned from the Maori crew was the original and very ancient name of their island. It was given to the river on the west coast of New Zealand by the early navigator Ngahue. "Takitimu" is another instance of this sort. It is the name of a high range in the south, near Lakes Manapouri and Te Anau, and is also the name of a locality on the tropic Island of Rarotonga. The name, say the Southland Maoris, was given to the mountain by Tamatea, the chief who commanded the "Takitimu" (or "Takitumu") canoe, one of the historic fleet which arrived on these shores from Hawaiiki about six centuries ago, some time after Ngahue's exploring voyage to New Zealand. The mountain is in a sense the Maori Ararat, for it was here that the "Takitimu" canoe is fabled to have found its final resting-place in the days when the ocean flowed over the plains of Southland and washed the feet of the Takitimus. From some of the Maoris, too, one hears the fanciful legend that the range is the "Takitimu" canoe capsized, metamorphosed into a gigantic mountain; in proof of which they point to the abruptly sloping terminals of the range, not unlike the shape of the bow and stern of an up-ended canoe. "Takitimu" is still an honoured name in the olden home of the Maori. A Native-built schooner of the rough-and-ready home-made type which visited Auckland some years ago from Rarotonga, manned by a white captain and a Maori crew, bore the historic name "Takitumu," and voyaged over the self-same ocean route that Tamatea's Polynesian adventurers took in their much frailer craft six hundred years before.

A beautiful and very appropriate name is "Motu-rau," the

ancient name of Lake Manapouri. It means "hundred islands" or "multitude of islands." If you visit Manapouri you will readily understand why this name (which I do not think has ever previously been recorded) came to be given to the lake, the most beautiful water-sheet in New Zealand. It is crowded with islands of all shapes and sizes. All around you they lie as you sail up the lake, some high and rocky, some tiny dots of granite or sandstone, but all wooded so luxuriantly that they seem like tree-groves floating on the surface of the water. No matter how small the islet, if only the size of a table, it supports as many trees and shrubs as it can well hold. The "Lake of a Hundred Islands" must have been an ideal cruising-ground for the neolithic Maori. The ancient Ngatimamoe gave the lake this name "Motu-rau," according to the Murihiku Maoris, who are in part descended from the Ngatimamoe; but probably the name is of even greater antiquity, and dates back to the era of the Waitaha.

"Manapouri" (a combination of two words meaning "authority" or "prestige," and "sorrowful") is simply a modernised rendering of the name "Manawa-pore" (or "Manawa-popore"), signifying the violent throbbing of the heart, as after great exertion or under intense emotion. "Manawa-pore" is stated by the Southland Maoris to be really the name of the North Mavora Lake, lying between Wakatipu and Te Anau. The name is said to have been transferred in error to the larger lake by the early surveyors and map-makers. Various more or less fanciful interpretations of the corrupted name "Manapouri" or "Manawa-pouri" have appeared in print, and imaginative writers have connected it with the story of the fugitive tribe Ngatimamoe. "Manawa-pore" was, however, originally the name of a person, a tribal ancestor of chiefly rank, as was also the name "Te Anau."

Lake Te Anau, I am informed by the old Natives of Murihiku, was named after a woman, the daughter of the chief Hekeia, one of the early immigrants from Hawaiiiki, after whom a Southland mountain has been named. As in the case of "Manapouri," many imaginary interpretations of "Te Anau" have appeared in print. The latest invention in this direction appeared in a Dunedin paper recently, when a long poem on Te Anau was published, in which it was explained that "Te Anau" meant "wandering lake." How, or why, or where the lake "wandered" was left to the reader's imagination. The South Mavora Lake is known to the old Maoris as "Hikuraki" (a dialectical variant of the North Island "Hiku-rangi"), a common Maori place-name, meaning "the tail of the sky"—the horizon. It is interesting

to note that this is also the name of a mountain in Rarotonga Island. It was no doubt given to this mountain-lake by the "Takitimu" immigrants.

Of the great southern lakes, Wakatipu's name is the most difficult of explanation. The Maoris inform me that "Whakaitipu" (with an "h") is the correct name, but the incident which led to this being given to the lake has passed out of the recollection of the Maoris whom I have consulted. "Whakaitipu" means "to nourish, to rear," from the root word *tipu* or *tupu* ("to grow, to spring up as a tree"). The actual origin of the great lake is, however, accounted for in Native legend in a fashion thoroughly Maori. When the chief Rakaihaitu, one of the very first of the Polynesian sea-rovers to explore this country (long before the sailing of the "Takitimu" and other historic canoes—probably about a thousand years ago), arrived in the South Island he took possession of the eastern seaboard and the land sloping up therefrom to the great snowy mountains. As was customary, the pioneers named many prominent features of the landscape after themselves, and so *tapa'd* the country for their families and descendants; and Rakaihaitu, in common with many other Polynesian explorers, was in time credited with the deeds of a demi-god. The classical name for the South Island lakes is "Nga-puna-wai-karikari-a-Rakaihaitu" ("The water-pools dug by Rakaihaitu"). The energetic chief is said to have begun his labours by scooping out with his great *ko* (the wooden spade used in the *kumara* plantations) the bed of the lake known as Rotoiti, south of Nelson. Then he strode southwards, halting frequently to form a lake where he thought it was needed. His crowning triumph was Whakaitipu, whose crooked channel he hollowed out between the mountains with infinite toil and many incantations. Travelling north again, he completed his herculean pilgrimage by digging out Lakes Waihora (Ellesmere) and Wairewa (Lake Forsyth), near Banks Peninsula—and rested from his labours. "Nga-wai-karikari-a-Rakaihaitu" is a proverbial expression still used by the Maoris in allusion to the lakes, as the figurative phrase "Nga-whata-tu-a-Rakaihaitu" ("Rakaihaitu's lofty food-stores") is used to describe the high cliffs of the South Island coast.

At the lower end of Lake Wakatipu, not far from the Kingston Railway-station, there is a group of craggy peaks called by the Maoris "the Fairy Mountains." These heights tower 5,000 ft. immediately above the steamer on the left as you start up the lake. They were regarded with some dread by the old Maoris, who peopled them with giants and fairies (*maeroero*). The superstitious Native of olden days, for ever hearing uncanny

sounds and reading strange omens in earth and sky, was careful not to venture too close to the haunts of the *maeroero*. On gloomy and misty days, when the fog descended and enveloped the heights, the fairy people could be heard singing songs in a ghostly cadence and calling to each other; and then, too, resounded the faint and plaintive music of the *koauau*, or nose-flute, and the doleful note of the *putorino* horn, and the voices of the fairy children laughing and singing above the clouds. A quaint story of these *maero* mountains used to be told by the late chief Paitu, who lived at Riverton. When he was a youth, he said, he lived at the *kaika* of Takerehaka (where Kingston now stands). The shores of Whakatipu abounded in fat woodhens (*weka*), and Paitu and his companions spent much of their time in hunting them for food. The elder people warned him not to cross a certain little stream at the base of the mountains, for beyond it, they said, was the home of the *maeroero*, amidst dark overhanging cliffs. "You may hear the cry of the *weka* beyond the creek," Paitu was told, "but beware—the *maero* will have you if you cross." One night Paitu, hunting *wekas* as usual with his dog, found himself close to the forbidden stream, and, hearing the cry of a *weka* on the other side, waded through, unmindful of the warning. He crept along through the shrubbery to a clump of *mikimiki* bushes, where the bird was feeding on the berries. Holding his dog in leash, he began to *turutu*—that is, to imitate the cry of the *weka*, so as to lure it within catching-distance. Enticing the woodhen closer and closer, he quietly sent his dog at it. The dog seized the bird, but next moment there was a terrific yelp, and the animal flew back trembling and whining; and through the darkness Paitu heard a gruff voice exclaim "*E-e! Taku weka momona*" ("Ha! my fat woodhen"). It was the *maero*! With hair on end Paitu left his *weka* to the *maero* and splashed homeward through the creek, fearing every moment to feel the grip of the mountain-ogre on his shoulder; and he and his dog ventured no more into the haunted spot. The old Maoris on the coast to this day speak of these dark and lowering heights as "*nga puke maeroero*" ("the hills of the fairies").

A familiar name to New-Zealanders is "Monowai," the modern name of a lake in the extreme south-west of the South Island, after which one of the Union Company's steamers is named. This name is generally pointed to as a curious combination of the Greek word *monos* ("one") and Maori *wai* ("water"). It was given by Mr. McKerrow, late Surveyor-General, who first surveyed the lake. It is not so generally known, however, that the correct Maori name of the lake is "Manokiwai," originally a personal name: this is the name by which it is known to the

Southland Maoris to-day. "Monowai" is really a corruption of "Manokiwai." (See Mr. McKerrow's note.)*

A memory of the vanished tribe Ngatimamoe is contained in the name "Wawahi-waka," which is that of an island in the upper part of Lake Wakatipu, called by the Europeans "Pigeon Island." "Wawahi-waka" means "splitting canoes"; it owes its origin to the ancient Ngatimamoe, and other people of the Stone age, who resorted here to fell and split up trees for the purpose of canoe-making. Totara pines of large size formerly grew on this island, now almost treeless.

Lakes Wanaka, Hawea, Pukaki, and numerous other southern lakes were named after persons of olden days. In Lake Wanaka there is a very remarkable little island containing a pretty lakelet, 500 ft. above the level of Wanaka—a lake within a lake. This island ("Manuka" or "Pigeon Island," the *pakeha* calls it) is "Te Mou-a-hou," meaning "Hou's islet." Another island in Lake Wanaka is "Motu-tapu," or "holy isle"—a very ancient and classic South-Sea-Island name. "Te Motu-tapu-a-Timirau" will be familiar to students of Polynesian mythology. This was the original name of Mokoia Island in Lake Rotorua—the Olympus of the Arawa Tribe.

Turning to the mountains of the Southern Alps we find comparatively few of these great snowy peaks named by the Maoris, who did not care to venture far into the wastes of rock and ice. The beautiful Maori name "Ao-rangi" ("Ao-raki" in the South Island dialect) has been frequently but erroneously translated as "cloud-piercer," a purely fanciful interpretation. The "cloud of heaven" may be accepted as the literal meaning of "Ao-rangi." This place-name embodies a reminiscence of the fatherland of the Maori, for there is a high mountain named "Aora'" (or "Ao-rangi") on the Island of Tahiti, in the Society Islands. Tradition also asserts that "Aorangi" was the name of one of the chiefs who arrived in the South Island from Hawaiiki in the canoe "Ara-i-te-uru,"

* Mr. McKerrow has kindly furnished the following note on the subject: "In September, 1862, when on my way through Riverton to engage in the reconnaissance survey of the country drained by the Waiau River, I met the well-known Maori, Solomon (since deceased), and learned from him that there were two lakes in the bush west of the river. He said that he had never seen them, but an old woman in his *kaika* had seen them when a girl, and that their names were—as I made out from his pronunciation—'Howloko' and 'Monowai.' 'Howloko' has since been corrected to 'Hauroto.' And 'Manokiwai,' which you state is the name by which the lake is known to the Middle Island Natives to-day, may probably be the name that Solomon gave me, although I was unable at the time to come nearer to it than the hybrid 'Monowai,' meaning 'one water.' That designation, as it happens, is not inapt, as the lake is mainly fed by one river."

circa 1350. Two other immigrants by this Polynesian viking-ship were Kirikiri-katata and Aroaro-kaihe. The former name was given by the Maori explorers to the Mount Cook Range, while that of Aroaro-kaihe was bestowed upon one of the icy peaks of Aorangi. The peak now known as Mount Tasman was at the same time named "Horo-koau." "Aorangi" was the term usually applied to Mount Cook by the Maoris on the west coast; those on the eastern plains generally called it "Kirikiri-katata." Although said to be originally a personal name, it is significant that these words may be used to denote a fissured or cracked mountain-side of gravel, which would exactly describe the deeply eroded couloir-riven end of the Mount Cook Range as seen from the Tasman Valley.

Mount Sefton's Native name is said by old Canterbury Maoris to be "Maunga-atua," meaning "the mountain of the god" (or holy mount). As in the case of Aorangi, this name is stated to have been conferred in honour of an ancestral chief who arrived on these shores in the "Ara-i-te-uru" canoe from the South Sea Islands. There is, however, a Native legend (probably a comparatively modern invention) supporting the title of "Maunga-atua" with the assertion that a spirit (*atua*) dwells in these tremendous solitudes, and that its thundering voice is heard in the crashing of the avalanches that continually fall from Sefton's ice-hung cliffs.

Perhaps the most descriptive of the South Island mountain names is that of Mount Aspiring, a very grand ice-clad peak little short of 10,000 ft. in height—the highest mountain south of the Aorangi alpine group. Its beautiful Maori name, never before recorded, is well worth preserving—"Titi-tea"—which may be interpreted as "steep peak of glistening white."

Very few of the names of the high mountain-peaks in the South Island map are Maori. "Tapuae-nuku," the highest point of the Kaikoura Ranges, is one of the exceptions. It may be interpreted either as "the footsteps of Uenuku" (full name "Tapuae-uenuku")—that is, the rainbow, which is the visible sign or *aria* of the god Uenuku—or as "moving or sliding footsteps." The Maori name of the Blue Mountains in Otago is also "Tapuae-nuku," which has been corrupted into "Tapanui," the present name of the town near the foot of these mountains. Mention of Kaikoura reminds me that old Ira Herewini, of Moeraki, tells me the full name of the locality is "Te Ahi-Kaikoura-a-Tama-ki-te-Rangi"—*i.e.*, the place where the early navigator Tama, the commander of the "Tairea" canoe, landed and kindled a fire to cook a meal of *koura*, or crayfish.

The expression "Te-Waka-a-Maui" ("the canoe of Maui"), as an ancient name for the South Island of New Zealand, is still

occasionally heard from the lips of the old people of the Ngaitahu Tribe. The notion that it was from the South Island that Maui fished up the North ("Te Ika-a-Maui," "the fish of Maui") is, however, a purely southern concept. It would be hard to convince a northern Maori of the superior antiquity of the greenstone land. "Te Taumanu-o-te-Waka-a-Maui" ("the thwart of the canoe of Maui")—on which Maui stood when hauling up his land-fish—is said by the Ngaitahu to be the name of a place in the neighbourhood of Kaikoura.

An ancient mythological honorific title of Stewart Island (or Rakiura) is "Te Puka-o-te-waka-a-Maui," which means "the anchor of Maui's canoe."

But the subject of these place-names is one that cannot be dealt with in one paper. I have a very long list of South Island names not yet recorded in print, or, if recorded, only inaccurately. I believe that Mr. Justice Chapman has during the course of many years acquired a very considerable list of South Island place-names from the old Maoris, particularly from the late chief Rawiri te Maire, of South Canterbury. I hope that he will some day publish them. Another matter in connection with Maori place-names that should have attention is the pronunciation. New-Zealanders at any rate should have no excuse for mispronunciation of the names of their own homes, for the language is phonetic, and simple in the extreme; yet how often one hears such mispronunciation as "Tarangger" for "Tauranga," "Narranger" for "Ngauranga," "Mew-ree-ty" for the beautiful name "Muritai" ("the sea-breeze"). The only remedy, I suppose, is to teach our school-teachers at least the Maori alphabet and some of the rudiments of the language, for it is no doubt in the schools that colonial children first hear many of these names so mispronounced.

ART. XIX.—*Some Historic Maori Personages.*

By THOMAS W. DOWNES.

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Plates XIV-XVII.

STUDENTS will agree that all facts that can possibly be obtained regarding the Maoris should be placed on record, for it seems only too true that the day is quickly coming when this interesting race will be but a memory. Their history has been largely supplied by the late Mr. John White. Messrs. Taylor, Best, Colenso, Smith, and Tregear deal largely with their manner of life; Archdeacon Williams has rendered great