

ART. XXXIX.—*Notes on certain Maori Carved Burial-chests in the Auckland Museum.*

By T. F. CHEESEMAN, F.L.S., F.Z.S., Curator of the Auckland Museum.

[Read before the Auckland Institute, 3rd October, 1906.]

Plates XII and XIII.

VERY little appears to be known respecting the occasional former use by the Maoris of carved burial-chests or coffins in which the bones of deceased chiefs were placed after the ceremony of *hahunga*, and then deposited in the burial-cave of the tribe. In none of the earlier accounts of Maori burial customs can I find any description of such articles. The usual statements made as to the disposition of the bones after the *hahunga* are well summarised by Mr. Colenso in his "Essay on the Maori Races of New Zealand," where he says (page 20): "After being exhibited, seen, wept, and wailed over, they [the bones] were carried by a single man and near relative to their last resting-place, the exact spot of deposit, for wise political reasons, being only known to a select few. Sometimes the bones were thrown into some old volcanic rent or chasm; sometimes thrown into very deep water-holes; and sometimes neatly and regularly placed in a deep, dark cave; always, if possible, wherever those of his ancestors happened to be."

The only reference of old date respecting the use of coffins that I have been able to find—and that a mere passing mention—is in Mr. Colenso's account of his discovery of the tree *manao* (*Dacrydium colensoi*), printed in the "London Journal of Botany" (vol. i, p. 298), where he says, speaking of the rarity of the tree and the durability of its wood, that the Maoris "wherever they could find a tree reserved it for a coffin to hold the remains of a chief." Nor do I find in any Maori dictionary a word that could be applied to a coffin or burial-chest; and Bishop Williams, to whom I applied for information on the subject, has informed me that he is unacquainted with a Maori term for such articles. The word "*atamira*," which of late years has been applied to them, he considers to be more correctly used for the stage or platform upon which a dead body is laid out.

Mr. Elsdon Best's valuable paper on Maori eschatology, printed in the last volume of Transactions (vol. xxxviii, pp. 148-239), which is a storehouse of information respecting the customs, &c., relating to death and burial among the Maori people,

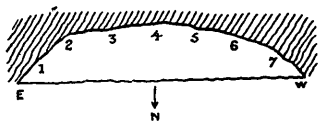
contains some references to the placing of dead bodies in boxes or coffins, which were sometimes placed in trees, sometimes on the top of tall posts. But it appears to me that these receptacles are of quite a different nature, being plainly temporary, and only intended to hold the decomposing body until the time of the *hahungá*. The only mention made by Mr. Best respecting coffins to hold the bones after the *hahungá* refers to the specimens I am now about to describe.

The first examples of carved wooden coffins that came under my notice were two obtained by an Auckland dealer some years ago. These were of precisely the same pattern as those now in the Museum, and had been originally carved all over the surface, but owing to their great age, and the consequent decay of the wood, the details of the carving were to a considerable extent obliterated. The better one of the two is now in the Melbourne Museum; the other one was purchased by Mr. A. Hamilton, and now forms part of his collection deposited in the Colonial Museum. A photograph of this is reproduced in Mr. Hamilton's "Maori Art" (page 158).

In the autumn of 1902 two Europeans were pig-hunting in a rough and rugged part of the Waimamaku Valley, a few miles to the south of Hokianga. While so doing they accidentally discovered two small caves situated on the face of a precipitous cliff. Entering these, they found that they were literally packed with human skeletons, and that they also contained no less than eight carved burial-chests, most of them full of bones. The caves being on Government land, the finders reported the discovery to the Commissioner of Crown Lands at Auckland, with the result that Mr. Menzies, Government Road Inspector, was instructed to proceed to the caves and take charge of the chests, impressing on the Natives the desirability of presenting them to the Auckland Museum.

One of the discoverers, Mr. Louis Morrell, has kindly furnished me with information as to the position in which the burial-chests were found. He states that all the chests, except one carved on the back to resemble a lizard, were found in the largest cave, which is really a shelf of conglomerate rock about 20 ft. long by 10 ft. wide, situated on the face of a cliff, the cliff overhanging and keeping the floor dry. The cave faces the north, and the sun shines into it for most of the day. The chests were standing up with their backs against the wall, and most of them were full of bones. Those that were not were evidently empty because the lashings which had fastened the lids to the back of the chests had given way, the bones falling out. The small carved box with square ends and perforated sides, and painted with *kokowai*, also had bones in it, and was resting on its lid at the western

side of the cave at the point marked 7 in the sketch. The figure 3 represents where the tallest chest was placed, and 1 and 5 the positions of those next in size; 2, 4, and 6 those of the others.



Round the corner of the cliff, at the west end of this cave, and about 12 ft. higher up the cliff, was a second cave, barely more than 6 ft. in total length, and with a very small entrance. Right in the entrance, and almost blocking it, was a single burial-chest carved on the surface to represent a lizard. It was placed with its flat or hollow side downwards on the floor of the cave, the head of the lizard pointing to the south. The chest itself was empty, but numbers of skeletons (from twenty to twenty-four, according to Mr. Morrell) were packed around it—so closely, in fact, that the chest could not be removed until the bones were displaced.

The only other articles found in the caves—but in which of them Mr. Morrell does not state—were a short *tao*, or spear; a *ko*, or spade; a wooden comb; and some fragments of Maori flax cloaks.

The discovery of the burial-chests naturally caused great excitement among the Maoris residing near Waimamaku, and at first they strongly objected to the proposed removal of the chests to the Auckland Museum. They were unable to understand why these sacred articles should be taken from them, especially as they were actually the receptacles of the bones of their ancestors. They regarded the matter as an attempt to trample on their most sacred rites and traditions; and it was not until there had been several heated discussions between the Maoris and the Resident Magistrate, Mr. Blomfield, that an arrangement could be arrived at. Mr. Blomfield at length succeeded in convincing them that as the chests, if left at Waimamaku, would soon perish by the ravages of time, it would be wise on their part to deposit them in a secure place where they would be preserved for ages to come, and would form a permanent memorial of their ancestors who made them, and whose memory they themselves wished to keep alive. Ultimately it was agreed that the articles should be handed over by the Natives to the Hon. the Native Minister as their trustee, and that he should place them in the Auckland Museum to remain there for ever. The chiefs concerned in the gift were Ngakura Pana and Iehu Moetara, of Waimamaku, and Hoterene Wi Pou and Heremaia Kauere, of Otaua.

A considerable amount of evidence was taken by Mr. Blomfield when holding his inquiry, and this I have been kindly

allowed to peruse. I have extracted the following dealing with the history of the chests. Heremaia Kauere said,—

I belong to Ngaitu Hapu, and to Ngatene Hapu, also to Ngatiteka and Nga-te-po. These are the hapus that made these things. Ngaitu made all these things. Kohuru was the man that made them; he was a chief, and was skilled in carving, and an instructor to the tribe. He lived at Otatau, say twenty miles away, but used to go all over the place. There are five *tikis* in the cave. One he made for Kahu Makaka, who had been dead for a long time, to put his bones in. It was the custom to put the body in trees, and then get the bones after. Kohuru died at Waimamaku. He belonged to Ngaitu and Ngatene. The *tiki* was put in a cave called Kohekohe, the cave which the Europeans have now disturbed. Kohuru himself conveyed the bones to the cave in the *tiki*; he took them from a stone close to the cave. He was a priest. The right was limited to the priests. I do not know whose bones were in the other *tikis*. They were all taken by Kohuru to the cave. The *waka* was made for the bones of Tangataiki. Taiki was his father. When he died, his body was placed in a hollow tree, a totara. Some years after, when they went to get the bones they found the skin dried over the head, which was preserved, showing the elaborate tattooing. The skin was also preserved over the other parts of the body; the legs were the only parts that had gone. The body was taken down and placed in the cave at the time of the fight of Motukauri. Whitinga was the man who took the body and placed it in the cave; he died four years ago. He put it in the cave and placed the *waka* over it. Kohuru did not make the *waka*—it was his descendants, about five generations after. A *tiki* was placed at each side of the entrance to the cave. The *waka*, with the lizard on it, stretched across the mouth inside. The bones of each ancestor were grouped along each side of the cave. There were three hapus—Ngaitu, Ngatene, and Nga-te-po—on the right-hand side, and Ngatiteka on the left. There were great numbers of bones there. My grandfather, Kahu Makaka, a namesake of the former Kahu Makaka, when he came with the bones of Hui, one of his relations, walked over the top of the lizard and placed the bones at the end of the cave. He must have been confused; he did not go round the *waka* as was the custom. He stepped back again over the lizard, and was bitten by the spirit of the lizard. He felt sick when he got out; went home, and died. They took his body to the cave, and afterwards conveyed the bones to Otatau. My father died at Otatau. After the death of Kahu Makaka my father lived at Waimamaku, and went to Otatau before the Treaty of Waitangi. The lizard was endowed by the incantations of our forefathers with powers of evil. It was placed as a guard over the bones of the dead, to prevent interference. The *tao*, being the weapon of one of the ancestors, was taken with the remains to the cave. The *korowai* coverings were those of Tangataiki. It is over sixty years since our people lived at Waimamaku before the Treaty of Waitangi; they lived in the valley, say two miles or less from the cave. Pene te Pana was one of the owners of the land that was sold to the Crown containing the cave. Hapakuku Moetara (dead), Tiopira (dead) were also owners; their ancestors are in the cave. Hapakuku is a direct descendant of Kahu Makaka. The name of the *wahitapu* where the cave is is Piwakawaka. There are three sets of caves there. The things referred to were all taken from Kohekohe.

It will be noticed that Heremaia Kauere distinguishes between the five (it should be six) *tikis* made by Kohuru and the much later *waka*, carved to represent a lizard, which was taken to the cave by Whitinga. This is borne out by the condition

of the carvings, the *waka* being evidently of much more recent date than the others. Heremaia does not mention the small square-ended box-like chest with perforated sides. With respect to the names applied to the chests by Heremaia, it may be said that the word "*tiki*" would naturally be used by the present-day Maoris to designate a carving imitating the human figure; and that "*waka*" is regularly employed to represent anything shaped like a canoe—for instance, *waka-huia*, a box for holding *huia*-feathers.

As already mentioned, the chests are eight in number. Of these, six are much older than the rest, and are carved representations of the human figure, with a hollow body, and a flat lid at the back. The largest is 5 ft. 9 in. in height, the next is 5 ft., and two others are 4 ft. 6 in. The remaining two were evidently smaller than the above at first, but are both injured, one having lost its head, and both of them portions of the legs. The carving is very distinctive, and quite unlike anything else in the Museum. The photographs reproduced in illustration of this article (Plates XII and XIII) will give a better idea than any description of mine, but I may draw attention to the singular leaflike pattern, very well marked in the two largest figures, and which is set at an acute angle to a central line passing down the middle of the body. The peculiar way in which the eyes are represented, the remarkable tongue of the largest figure, and the very curious manner in which the hands are carved, are all points worthy of close study. It should also be mentioned that the carving on the body of the third largest figure differs from all the others in being unlike on the opposite sides of the central line—one side showing the leaflike pattern of the rest, the other a succession of parallel longitudinal lines with numerous dots between, the effect being very similar to the old style of tattooing with straight lines and dots, represented in one of the plates in "Cook's Voyages." The two remaining chests, already stated to be of more recent date, are more or less canoe-shaped with square ends. The one with the representation of a lizard on the back is very finely and regularly carved with a modification of the same leaflike pattern, the carving being much more deeply cut than in the other figures. Both of these chests were coloured red with *kokowai* when found, whereas the others showed no trace of ever having been coloured.

It is permissible to speculate as to the age of the chests. According to Heremaia Kauerere, the death of his grandfather, Kahu Makaka—who was bitten by the lizard—took place some years before the Treaty of Waitangi in 1840, and the lizard must have been in the cave some years before Kahu's visit. We cannot assign a lesser age than seventy-five years

to this, the youngest of the chests. And the *tikis*, which were carved by Kohuru five generations earlier, must therefore be about two hundred years old. Their condition and general appearance quite bear out this assumption, to say nothing of the archaic style of carving, as already described.

Quite recently another discovery of burial-chests has been made, this time to the south of Auckland, on the sandhills near Raglan. I understand that they have been purchased by a gentleman at Wellington for his private collection.

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ART. XL.—*Notes on the Callianassidæ of New Zealand.*

By CHARLES CHILTON, M.A., D.Sc., F.L.S., Professor of Biology,  
Canterbury College, N.Z.

[Read before the Philosophical Institute of Canterbury, 5th December, 1906.]

Plate XVI.

THOUGH the *Callianassidæ* of New Zealand are few in numbers they have been only imperfectly described, and there has been some confusion as to the number of species found in New Zealand. This has been mainly due to the fact that, owing to their habit of burrowing in sand and mud, specimens are obtained only by some fortunate accident. Through the kindness of various friends I have now specimens of three species, and in this paper I give descriptions of these and endeavour to clear up the synonymy as much as possible. I am taking the family *Callianassidæ* as used by the Rev. T. R. R. Stebbing\* to include, among others, the two genera *Upogebia* and *Callianassa*, to which our New Zealand species have been assigned, and I make no attempt to discuss the characters of the genera. Some discussion of these two genera is given in Mr. Stebbing's "South African Crustacea," part i, pp. 38-46, where those who are interested in the matter will find numerous references to other papers. *Upogebia* and *Gebia* are two names used by Leach for the same genus, the former being the earlier and therefore the one to be retained.†

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\* "History of Crustacea," London, 1893, p. 183; and "South African Crustacea," part i, 1900, p. 38.

† See Stebbing, "History of Crustacea," p. 185.