

Shared Place Names Between Mehetia Island (Society Islands) and New Zealand: Enhanced Recognition as a Possible Departure Point for Polynesian Voyaging to New Zealand

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ABSTRACT

Shared place names between two distant, but related societies, constitute an important proxy or surrogate for a common ancestry. A feature of New Zealand (Aotearoa) is the number of toponyms common with the ancestral Māori homeland in the Hawaiki zone. A study of shared place names between Mehetia Island in the Society Islands and New Zealand demonstrates an overwhelming number of shared toponyms based on a land area index for Mehetia (2.3 km²). This index of cognate toponyms found on Mehetia (9.6) places this island well ahead of any other island or island group in the eastern Pacific. Recent research has identified the sacred island of Mehetia as a likely departure point for some Polynesian voyagers to New Zealand based on the discovery of three shaped scoria blocks, possibly from that island and of which two are now found in secure contexts in archaeological sites in southern New Zealand. Mehetia Island is linked to New Zealand by means of five lines of evidence; the island and its peak, Hi'ura'i which was sacred to early Tahitians; Tahitian oral traditions that identify that island as a voyaging departure point for New Zealand; the occurrence within early New Zealand archaeological sites of shaped scoria blocks which may have originated from this island; the significant number of cognate toponyms found in New Zealand; and finally the extensive occurrence of the name Hikurangi/Hikuraki. Interestingly, this newly found potential importance of Mehetia as a voyaging point for early Polynesian navigators appears to be poorly reflected in current Māori oral traditions.

Key words : Place names, Mehetia Island, New Zealand, Polynesian voyaging

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1. Introduction

Commencing from the 19th century there has been an interest in recording shared place names between New Zealand and the eastern Pacific, in part to support the notion of Māori voyaging and the 'great fleet' (Smith, 1898; Best, 1917; Williams, 1912). The notion of the Great Fleet was widely accepted from the late 19th C through to the mid-20th C, if not a little later. It seems as though S. Percy Smith (1898) was the first to articulate the 'Great Fleet' concept in the literature of the day whereby seven canoes, *Aotea*, *Kurahaupō*, *Mataatua*, *Tainui*, *Tokomaru*, *Te Arawa*, and *Tākitimu* were all thought to have departed from the ancestral home of the Polynesian people in Hawaiki at or about the same time in the mid-14th C. This general notion was widely supported by such people as Elsdon Best and even Sir Peter Buck (Te Rangi Hīroa).

In addition, the importance of various islands in the eastern Pacific to New Zealand is recorded through Māori oral histories handed down through generations, what Davis *et al.* (1990) refer to as the *survey pegs of memory*. Best (1917, p.112) observed the high number of New Zealand place names or toponyms shared with both Ra'iatea and Taha'a in the Society Islands.

Among shared languages, cultural traditions, and artistic styles, place names enhance the link between people of ancestral Hawaiki and New Zealand, as they have been transported with purpose. As Ngāti Kuta kaumātua, Matutaera Te Nana Clendon sums up:

From there, you can see their footprints. Our ancestors, when they go to a new place, they leave a footprint via a name. Names don't just fall out of the sky (Johnston, 2018).

Place names have the most power during the early settlement phase of new places. Christophe Sand, Président d'ICOMOS Pasifika (pers. comm., 7th March 2021) writes:

The reason for my comment is that all humans, when they settle for the first time somewhere else than their motherland, give most often to their new place a name coming from their homeland. Look at the US, which had an indigenous population but is full of English place-names, sometimes with the "New" before. For the most part, its present inhabitants have no clue

where the original town-name or hamlet-name is located in Europe. So imagine for Pacific Islanders, on arriving in an empty Island must have been frightening, as the landscape was full of unknown spirits and natural forces that they had to "domesticate" in order to settle peacefully. Giving these places a name that related to important-powerful-sacred places of the homeland helped "domesticate" the local natural forces and to be protected against them. In the long run, the importance of a place in the homeland might have been lost, but the name remains.

Thus, when former settlement events occurred, now lost to current human memory and oral traditions, place names survive and act as ancestral places of origin. These linkages by means of place names over an immense area of ocean and the interconnectedness of people separated by thousands of kilometers underline the notion that the dispersal of Polynesian people is not so much about what happened but as Christina Thompson (2019, p.12) points out, the question is, *how we know*. Part of this 'how we know' can be found and decoded from within cognate place names separated by huge expanses of oceanic waters across the Pacific Ocean, yet tied to people with a common ancestry.

This contribution will firstly introduce the study of shared eastern Pacific place names with New Zealand focusing on Andrew Crowe's recent research (Crowe, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2018) but concentrating on the island of Mehetia in the Society Islands (**Figs. 1, 2**) as a case study. This contribution will then be integrated with our research into three scoria blocks located in southern New Zealand (Collett *et al.*, 2022; Ramsay *et al.*, 2021) and deductions drawn linking Mehetia Island as a potentially important early voyaging hub or final departure point by Polynesian navigators to New Zealand.

2. Caveats in the use of place names

In his contribution Crowe (2012, p.46) raised several warnings regarding the use of cognate toponyms noting the incomplete nature of the evidence. To this end he observed that gaps derive from the loss of many original names or their actual location and from loss of the oral record. Helen Kerfoot (2009) notes that names are a connecting point between man and the land, however she continues that names may change based on war and conquest, boundary

changes, and post-colonial intervention. A case in point regarding post-colonial intervention has been recorded by Robinson (2017) for Tawhiti Rahi in the Poor Knights Islands where there were few confirmed Māori place names. Robinson states that after a number of scientific research visits in the 1960s it was suggested that names be given to places throughout the island group to be used by visitors as reference points. In 1966 the New Zealand Geographic Board (NZGB) approved a list jointly submitted by A.H.(Pick) Pickmere and by G. Stephenson. Apparently, most of these names were applied by Pickmere in 1926 when he first surveyed the Poor Knights Islands.

3. Statistical studies of eastern Pacific place names

Possibly the first detailed statistical investigation of shared place names in the Pacific has been by Koskinen (1963, 1973). He identified 989 place names found in New Zealand replicated in the eastern Pacific. More recently Crowe has undertaken a study of place names shared through the eastern Pacific with New Zealand (Crowe, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2018). In his first two papers (Crowe, 2012, 2013) he showed that there was a surprisingly high incidence of New Zealand Māori place names shared with the southern Pacific islands along the Tropic of Capricorn (Rapa Nui, Gambia Islands, Tuāmotus Archipelago, and Austral Islands) and also with the Hawaiian Islands to the north (**Table 1**).

Table 1. Number of names found in New Zealand and eastern Polynesia with repeated names removed, after Crowe (2012).

| Island or Archipelago | Number of corresponding names |
|-----------------------|-------------------------------|
| Hawaiian Islands | 337 |
| Society Islands | 122 |
| Tuāmotus Archipelago | 73 |
| Rapa Nui (Easter Is) | 55 |
| Southern Cook Islands | 50 |

Crowe (2012) used a statistical approach listing cognate names that are found both in New Zealand and on various eastern Pacific islands based on the number of shared names in proportion to land area (**Table 2**). Here the high

number of corresponding names between Hawaii and New Zealand drops, but as Crowe notes, the incidence of names found in the Society Islands and the Cook Islands is not prominent. The highest index obtained from Crowe's research is for Akiaki (5.38) and Vāhitahi (3.6) in the Tuāmotus archipelago (**Table 2**). Of note is the low index for the Society Islands as a whole (0.16) and for the island of Tahiti (Tahiti Nui and Tahiti Iti) at 0.11, subsequently revised to 0.12 (Crowe, 2014).

Table 2. New Zealand place names that reoccur in the eastern Pacific in proportion to land area (after Crowe, 2012, 2014).

| Island name | Names per km ² | Island name | Names per km ² |
|---------------------------------------|------------------------------|----------------------------|---|
| Akiaki (Tuāmotus Archipelago) | 5.38 names / km ² | Austral Islands | 0.24 names / km ² |
| Vāhitahi (Tuāmotus Archipelago) | 3.60 names / km ² | Tuāmotus Archipelago | 0.17 names / km ² |
| Northern Cook Is | 1.48 names / km ² | Society Islands | 0.16 names / km ² |
| Gambier Islands | 0.77 names / km ² | 'Ua Huka (Marquesas) | 0.14 names / km ² |
| Rarotonga (South Cook Is) | 0.67 names / km ² | Maui (Hawaiian Islands) | 0.12 names / km ² |
| Rapa Nui (Easter Is) | 0.55 names / km ² | Fatu Hiva (Marquesas) | 0.12 names / km ² |
| All Cook Islands (North and South) | 0.54 names / km ² | Tahiti (Society Is) | 0.11 names / km ² (0.12 names / km ² , Crowe, 2014) |
| Ra'iatea and Taha'a (Society Is) | 0.26 names / km ² | Mehetia (Society Is) | 1.3 names / km ² |

In this statistical comparison of place names (**Table 2**) Crowe (2012, p. 46) recognised the high density of names associated with small atolls in the Northern Cook Islands and islands in the southern zone of the eastern Pacific (Rapa Nui and the Austral Islands) compared with both the Hawaii Islands, the Society Islands, and the Marquesas. Here Crowe found that the density of names shared with New Zealand in both the Society Islands and the Southern Cook Islands is in fact no greater than for each of the islands in, or near, the southern subtropical belt, ignoring those islands not inhabited in European times (Dulcie, Henderson, Pitcairn, and Oeno). Crowe (2012, p. 46) also noted that these findings were consistent with those by Koskinen's most recent survey (Koskinen, 1973) where he also recognised strong place name links between New Zealand and Rapa Nui. Crowe (2012, p. 46) raises the question as to whether the high incidence of names shared between Rapa Nui and New

Zealand is an artefact of initial colonisation from a common source, or whether it reflects a degree of post-settlement interaction?

In the case of the various islands in the Society Islands, the following indices calculated by Crowe are given in **Table 3**. For the island of Mehetia we have inserted the index 1.3 based on the three cognate names given by Crowe (2014, p. 15) for that island divided by the island's surface area, 2.3 km².

Table 3. Index of cognate place names found in the Society Islands and New Zealand, after Crowe (2012, 2014). For Mehetia 3 cognate names are given by Crowe (2014) namely Fare'ura, Maketu, and Tuhua which gives an index of 1.3 for 2.3 km² land area.

| Island name | Names per km ² |
|-------------------------|---|
| Society Islands (total) | 0.16 names / km ² |
| Huahine | 0.13 names / km ² |
| Tahiti Nui / Tahiti Iti | 0.11 names / km ² (0.12 names / km ² , Crowe,2014) |
| Mo'orea | 0.18 names / km ² |
| Ra'iatea and Taha'a | 0.26 names / km ² |
| Borabora | 0.59 names / km ² |
| Mehetia | 1.3 names /km ² |

Using the data supplied by Crowe (2014), the index for Mehetia (1.3) is well above the indices for other islands in the Society Islands and this sets Mehetia apart, admittedly based on three cognate toponyms alone. The nearest is Borabora with an index of 0.59 (**Table 3**).

3.1 Mehetia Island place names

In June 1767 the English ship *HMS Dolphin* under the command of Captain Samuel Wallis, after sailing through the Tuāmotus Archipelago, approached the upstanding island of Mehetia (**Fig. 1**). Wallis named this island *Osnaburgh* in honour of the Bishop of Osnaburgh, Prince Frederick. Subsequently, on November 1772 the frigate *Santa Maria Magdalen*, captained by Don Domingo

de Boenechea, arrived at Mehetia. The Spanish named the island *San Cristobal* or *Cerro de San Cristobal* (Torrente, 2004).

The current name of the island, *Mehetia* in Western literature, dates from the first expedition by Captain James Cook on the *HMS Endeavour*. Numerous spellings of the name of the island have been published as summarised in **Appendix 1**.

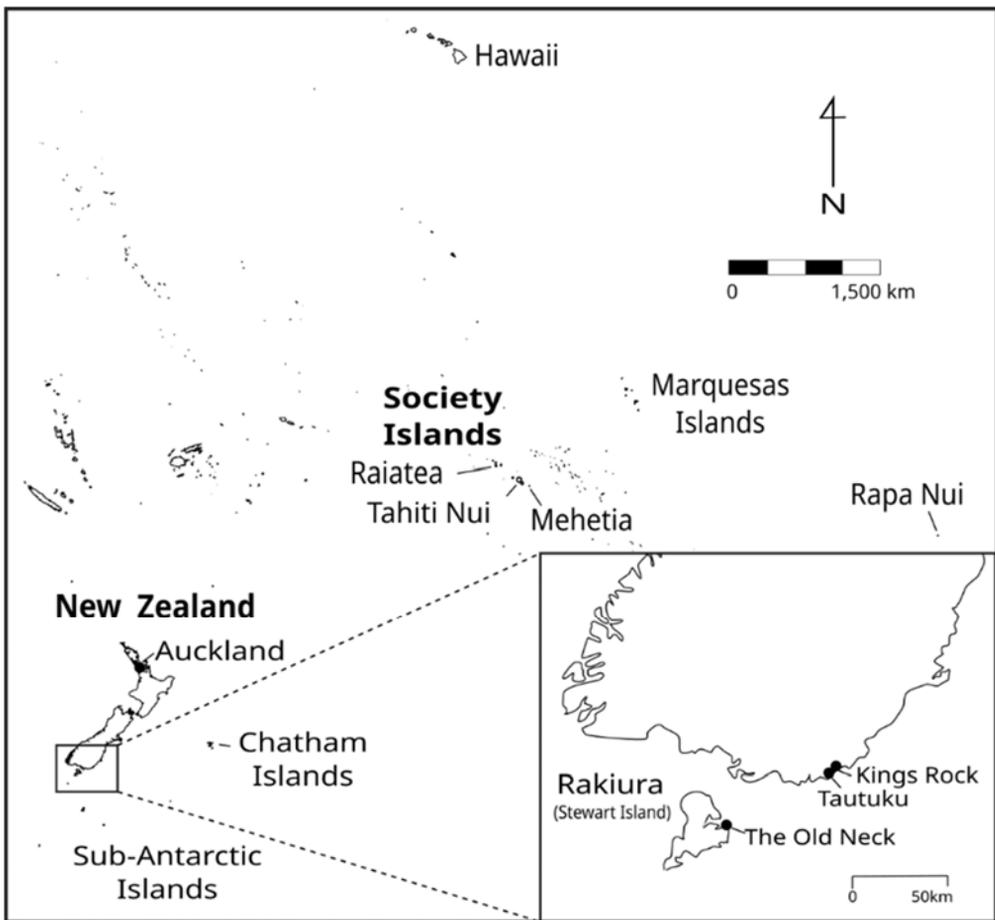


Figure 1. Location map showing Mehetia Island in the Society Islands, French Polynesia and the location of three scoria blocks found in southern New Zealand. Reprinted by permission Wylie Interscience.

Oral accounts in the Society Islands record that the island of Mehetia (**Fig. 1**) was sacred to the Polynesian people (Torrente, 2004, p. 59). Emory (1933, p. 109) records that the island was the ancient point of departure from the Society Islands

to the great atoll world of the Tuāmotus and conversely it was the gateway to Tahiti for those arriving from the east. According to Torrente (2004, p. 46) the island of Mehetia has had various names attached to it. He suggests that the earliest name applied to that island was *Tuhua*; *tu* supposedly means upright and *hua* meaning completely, possibly a reference to the way the island juts out of the water rising to some 435 m above sea level. However, Emory (1933, p. 110) questions this, suggesting instead that *Tuhua* is a mis-transcription of *Tuhiva* which in turn relates to an early chief of that island who was called *Te-kura-o-Tuhiva*. We question this suggestion by Emory as the name *Tuhua* has been preserved in Māori oral history in several accounts ~5,000 km to the southwest of the Society Islands.

Best (1925, p. 392) states:

After sojourning among the aborigines for some time, Toi and his companions went to Aotea (Great Barrier Island), thence down the coast to Mayor Island, which he named Tuhua, after the island in far-away Polynesia, an island also known as Ahu and Maiteka.

Best assumed that this island was to be found in the Tuāmotus and in 1927 he wrote to the administrator of the Tuāmotus requesting research into and location of such an island formerly known as *Tuhua*. Apparently, investigations by Capt. Brisson failed to unearth anything (Brisson, 1929). Teuria Henry (1911, p. 224) records from oral history that *Tuhua* Island (stand entirely) lay to the southeast of *Hawaiki* being the same island as *Me'e-tia* or formerly called *Me'e-tu* before King *Tū* caused the name change. The island name under the form of *Meketika* has been apparently retained in the traditions of the Taranaki Māoris as being an island near *Hawaiki* (Tahiti) (Henry, 1911, p. 224). The name *Tuhua*, or possible derivations such as *Mangatuhua* stream, is found at some eight localities in New Zealand. This place name, besides being applied to Mayor Island located off the east coast of the North Island of New Zealand, also refers to a reef off Mayor Island, a hill near *Hokitika* on the West Coast of the South Island, and a hill and small settlement near *Taumarunui* in the centre of the North Island.

A second recorded name for the island is *Ahu Ahu* or *Ahu*. The term *ahu* in Tahitian refers to a stepped altar comprising the principal feature of a *marae*

(Emory, 1933, p. 111). Other features associated with the *ahu* on marae include *ahu-arii*, *ahu-mua*, and *ahu-ta'a* (Emory, 1933, p. 14). On Rapa Nui (Easter Island) the largest *ahu* is *Ahu Tongariki*, the location of 15 moai or statues. Crowe (2018, p. 20) states that there are more than 300 stone *ahu* or platforms scattered along the coast of this island. In New Zealand *ahu* refers to the foundation of a marae or sacred mound. The word also relates to *Te Ahuahu*, a prominent up-standing 373 m high basaltic cinder cone behind Kaikohe, Northland and its associated marae. On Great Barrier Island the landmark at the back of Kaitoke Beach is a crudely bedded, upstanding, sinter mass known as White Cliffs or *Te Ahumata*, while Great Mercury Island is known as *Ahuahu* a name Crowe (2014, p. 11) relates to *A'ua'u* an old name for Mangaia (Austral Islands). The name *Ahuahu* or variants of *Ahu* occur at numerous places throughout New Zealand.

Emory (1933, p. 110) notes that the recent name for Mehetia was *Meetu* (*Me'etu*) however during Pomare's ascendancy as high chief his sacred name was Tu, so the name for the island was changed from *Me'etu* to *Meetia* which in turn today has become Mehetia. In chants of the Tuāmotus the name of the island is referred to as *Meketu*. This name is apparently recorded as *Maketu* in the Bay of Plenty and for a pa at Kawhia (Crowe, 2014, p. 15), an island on Lake Taupo near Turangi, and several streams found in the Auckland, Wanganui, and Taranaki regions. *Maketu Pa* on the Kawhia Harbour is adjacent to the claimed resting spot of the Tainui canoe.



Figure 2. Image of Mehetia Island from the northern side. Image courtesy of Wikimedia

The main peak on the island of Mehetia is *Hi'ura'i*, which finds its counterpart in New Zealand as *Hikurangi* or *Hikuraki* in the South Island. This name can be traced back to Samoa on the island of Tau where there is a *Si'ulangi Point* and in turn to a high peak on Rarotonga in the Cook Islands known as *Ikurangi*. Te Ara Encyclopedia states that *Hikurangi* was transferred from Tahiti via Rarotonga to different parts of New Zealand.

Davis *et al.* (1990) record that the name *Hikurangi* in Māori may be broken down into *hiku* (point or summit) and *rangi* (heavens) and they note that it is perfectly understandable why such a name was applied to a mountain in a new land. The NZBG Gazetteer records two spellings of *Hikurangi*. The North Island version, *Hikurangi*, has 34 entries of which some names are of European introduction such as *Hikurangi Trough*, *Hikurangi Marine Reserve*, and *Northern Hikurangi Terrace*. The South Island version is *Hikuraki* of which the New Zealand Gazetteer records two occurrences and Te Ara Encyclopedia (2008, p. 3), four occurrences namely *Pelorus Sound*, *Wairau River*, the former name of *Banks Peninsula*, and the former name of *North Mavora Lake*.

As noted, the New Zealand Geographic Board Gazetteer records the name

Hikurangi 34 times and Hikuraki twice for New Zealand of which 17 are hills (including Goulter Hill near Blenheim), 18 if one includes the Hikurangi Range east of Mangaweka, and 19 if one includes Hikuraki for the two coalescing shield volcanoes, Banks Peninsula. To this list may be added Hikurangi Pa near Waiuku and the highly sacred locality, Hikurangi, located on the southern side of Hikurangi Channel, Chatham Island (Hamish Campbell, pers. com., 2022). While the name Hikurangi has been subsequently used by Europeans, the impression that we have is that both the island of Mehetia and its peak, Hi'ura'i, were sacred to these early voyagers and that these names, including *Tawhiti*, derived from eastern Polynesia, have been repeated many times in New Zealand. This overwhelming use of the toponym Hikurangi or Hikuraki, is in our opinion reflective of Christophe Sand (pers. com., 2021), who has pointed out:

Giving these places a name that related to important-powerful-sacred places of the homeland helped "domesticate" the local natural forces and to be protected against them.

Torrente (2004, p. 35) records that in the legends of Ngāti Porou of the East Coast of New Zealand, Hikurangi in New Zealand is a sacred mountain named in memory of *Te puke ki Hikurangi* in their ancestral land (near Hawaiki). Torrente points out that several accounts are apparently attached to this mountain in Hawaiki. In the legend of Paikea and Ruatapu living in Hawaiki, *Te puke ki Hikurangi* was a volcanic island which served as refuge to a group who survived huge waves (Orbell, 1995, p. 52-3). Crowe (2014, p. 16) states that the name Hikurangi relates back to a marae on Takapoto, northwest Tuāmotus. However, we suggest that in view of the large number of peaks with that name in New Zealand, and the breakdown of the name to *hiku* and *rangi*, that name must relate to the main peak on Mehetia in the first instance. In other words, the application of the name Hikurangi to so many peaks and positive topographic localities in New Zealand, suggests that the name derives from the volcanic cone of Mehetia rather than a flat atoll in the Tuāmotus.

Another positive topographic feature found in New Zealand is the place name *Aorangi / Aoraki*. The NZGB Gazetteer records that the name Aorangi for Mt. Cook also is associated with two hills, a range and a ridge, ignoring steams, reserves, and even a drain. This gives a total of five for prominent positive topographic features in New Zealand called Aorangi, which pales in number compared with the repeated use of the name Hikurangi. Davis *et al.* (2000) state that Aoraki (Aorangi) was an atua ancestor or demi-god who appears in Tahiti as *Aora'i* and in

Samoa as *Aolagi* and the name 'cloud piercer' is an invention of the New Zealand Tourism Department. This invention by the Department of Tourism as it pertains to Mt. Cook has nothing to do with either clouds or the sky.

In preparation for this work, we have catalogued a significant number of place names found on the Island of Mehetia over and above the three names recognised by Crowe (2014, p. 15). This compilation of names (**Table 4**) is taken in part from Emory (1933) and Torrente (2004, undated). In the period 13th-16th December, 1930 Kenneth Pike Emory together with Henry Devenish Skinner of the Otago Museum, and Martin Lawrence Grant of the Bernice P. Bishop Museum surveyed Mehetia. Emory records that the expedition was made possible through the cooperation of A. Krainer, who owned the greater part of the island and who himself joined the expedition. Emory further states that he was indebted to Krainer for the excellent map of Mehetia (**Fig. 3**). This map was apparently reproduced by him in his publication (Emory, 1933, Fig. 76) based on a survey by F. Hérault in 1928. As noted, further place names have been obtained from information and a map supplied by Torrente (2004, undated).

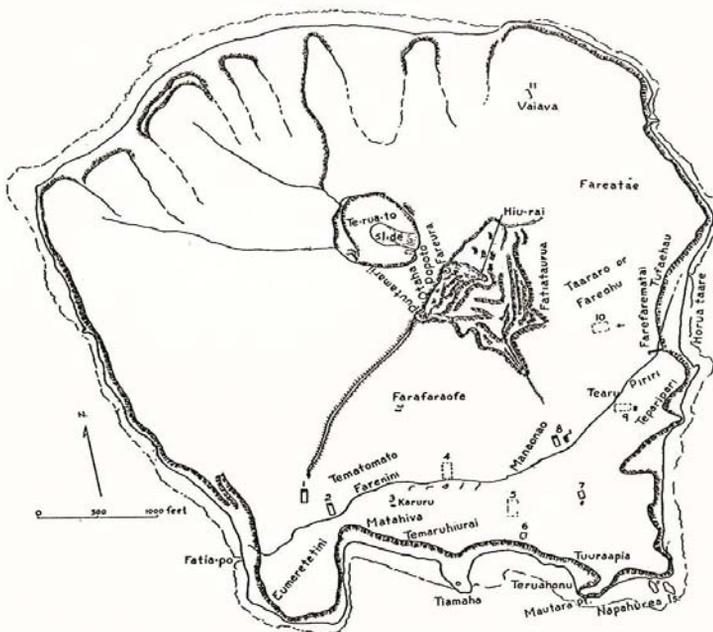


Figure 3. Map of Mehetia Island showing various place names, after Emory (1933). Numbered locations refer to maraes or stone deposits as listed by Emory. Published courtesy of the Bernice P. Bishop Museum, Hawaii.

Table 4. Place names found on Mehetia Island with cognate names found in New Zealand, compiled from Emory (1933); Torrente (2004, undated). New Zealand equivalents are shown in light grey, those in dark grey are uncertain, and those uncoloured apparently lack cognate toponyms in New Zealand.

| Affiliation | Name | Comment | New Zealand equivalent |
|-----------------|----------------------|----------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Name of island | Mehetia/Meetia | | |
| | Meetu/Me'etu/Maitu | | |
| | Ahu Ahu | | Ahuahu Island, Great Mercury Is |
| | Meketu/Ma'uke | Ancient chants from Tuāmotu | Maketu (Bay of Plenty) |
| | Tuhua | | Tuhua Island (Mayor Is) |
| | Tuhiva | | |
| Peaks | Tahiti-Nui a Ruarei | Ruarei son of Kaua | |
| | Hi'ura'i | main peak 435 m high | Hikurangi (numerous) |
| | Fare'ura | next peak 4 to northeast | Wharekura Point |
| | Fetia taurua | peak to east of main peaks | |
| | Popoto | peak 3 to northeast | Opopoto Bay |
| | Otaha | next peak 2 to northeast | Otaha, Northland |
| | Pu'utamarii | most southwest peak | |
| | Farafara'ofe | low hill southern flank | Wharawhara stream, Kaimais |
| Volcanic Crater | Teruato/Te rua to | main crater | Koteruato Stream |
| Land divisions | Taararo/Ta'a raro | eastern slope | |
| | Manaonao | southern flank | Manaohou Stream? |
| | Piripiri | southeast flank near coast | Numerous localities |
| | Tearu/Teahu | southern flank | |
| | Fareohu/Fare ohu | eastern slope | |
| | Ponao | eastern slope | |
| Maraes | Irakau | Name of ancient marae on Mehetia | Otuhirakau Stream |
| | Hikuragi / Hi'ura'i | | Many localities, as above |
| | Fareruki / Fare ru'i | | |
| | Karuru | single monolith (Emory, 1933) | Waikaruru |
| | Tuahu | | numerous |
| | Mahutoa | | Mahuta ? |

| Affiliation | Name | Comment | New Zealand equivalent |
|--------------------------------|---------------------------------|--------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Geographic | Tevivi | | |
| | Fareatae | northeast flank | Whareātea Bay, D'Urville Is |
| | Tematomato | southwest flank | |
| | Fare nini | southwest flank | |
| | Tufaehao | near east coast | |
| | Ta'aroa | is this the same as Ta'a raro? | Taharoa. Lake Taharoa. W coast |
| | ofa'i | southern flank | Owhai Bay, D'Urville Is ? |
| | Kararu | southern flank | |
| | Farefare mata'i | eastern flank | Auwharewhare stream |
| | Te ahu | south-east flank | Hill (Whanganui) |
| | Te paripari | southeast flank near coast | Paripari te tai (Lake Rotoiti) |
| | Te-iri-o-tuu | south flank near coast | |
| | Tu'urapia / Tuuraapia | south flank near coast | |
| | Matahiva | southern flank | Matahina/Matahiia |
| | Ana | cave, south coast | Ananui caves, Westland? |
| | Eu | | |
| | Eumeretetini | peninsula south flank | |
| | Fatiapo | west coast | |
| | Coasts, bays, landings, islands | Vai-ava/Vaiava | east coast |
| Hitiroa | | east coast | Rawhitiroa |
| Horuata'are | | rocks on east coast | |
| Tufaehau / Tufaehao | | east coast | |
| Te paripari | | southeast coast | Paripari Te Tai Bay, L. Rotoiti |
| Teamaru Hi'ura'i / Temaruhurai | | south coast | |
| Te Rua Honu | | large bay south coast | |
| outu Mautara | | point southeast coast | |
| motu Napahurea | | small island southeast coast | |
| outu Tiamaha | | point southeast coast | |
| Manauea | | pass / landing site SE coast | Manaua Point ? |
| Fatiapo | | pass / landing site SW coast | Whatipu ? |
| Ana tapairu | | southern coast | |
| Tapairu | southeast coast | Mangatapaiuru? Stream | |

The place names given in Table 4 can be divided into three groups, namely those for which cognate names have not been recognised by us (uncoloured), those that are questionable (dark grey), and those place names that we consider find their counterparts in New Zealand (light grey). We recognise a total of 22 cognate toponyms shared with New Zealand. Here the Hikuragi / Hi'ura'i marae on the island has been included with the main peak Hi'ura'i. A recast of Table 3 to show the new index for Mehetia Island is shown in Table 5. The index for Mehetia, based on a land area of 2.3 km², jumps to an astonishing 9.6, way in excess for any other island or island group recorded by Crowe from the eastern Pacific. This index of 9.6 is nearly double that of the index for Akiaki (5.38) in the Tuāmotus Archipelago, the highest index recorded by Crowe (2012, Table 3) for the entire eastern Pacific. The next highest index is for Vāhitahi (Tuāmotus Archipelago) at 3.6. In the case of the Society Islands the highest index recorded by Crowe (2012, Table 3) is for the island of Borabora at 0.59, while the island of Tahiti (Tahiti Nui and Tahiti Iti) is 0.11 (Table 5).

Table 5. Index of cognate place names found in the Society Islands and New Zealand, after Crowe (2012, 2014). Here the index for Mehetia Island has been recast to include the 22 cognate toponyms that we recognise between Mehetia and New Zealand.

| Island name | Names per km ² |
|-------------------------|---|
| Society Islands (total) | 0.16 names / km ² |
| Huahine | 0.13 names / km ² |
| Tahiti Nui / Tahiti Iti | 0.11 names / km ² (0.12 names / km ² , Crowe,2014) |
| Mo'orea | 0.18 names / km ² |
| Ra'iatea and Taha'a | 0.26 names / km ² |
| Borabora | 0.59 names / km ² |
| Mehetia | 9.6 / km ² |

4. Mehetia Island as an important voyaging hub to New Zealand

Recent research (Ramsay *et al.*, 2021; Collett *et al.*, 2022) has argued for a direct voyaging link between New Zealand and the Society Islands, possibly from the island of Mehetia, located some 110 km to the east-southeast of Tahiti Nui. This island has been recorded as the navel or *pito* of Tahiti both from a geographical basis and anthropomorphic reasons (Torrente, 2004, p. 44-45). This research has

involved three scoria blocks found in Māori occupation sites in southern New Zealand, namely two in the Catlins and one on Rakiura (Stewart Island). All three blocks are titaniferous, aluminous, alkaline, undersaturated, intraplate basalts whose isotopic compositions indicate a derivation from an EM-2 mantle source. Igneous rocks derived from an EM-2 mantle source are characterised by high $^{87}\text{Sr}/^{86}\text{Sr}$ and high $^{207}\text{Pb}/^{204}\text{Pb}$ for given $^{206}\text{Pb}/^{204}\text{Pb}$ ratios (Hofmann, 2003, p. 84). The conclusion reached by Ramsay and co-workers is that all three shaped blocks of scoria were transported by canoe most probably from the island of Mehetia in the Society Island group, during the initial phase of the colonisation of southern New Zealand over a distance approaching 5,000 kms.

5. Discussion

Crowe (2012, p. 43) observed that there are a number of islands in the east Pacific with significantly higher numbers of cognate place names with New Zealand than found in the Society Islands or the southern Cook Islands, often promoted as possible departure points for New Zealand by early Māori voyagers. Crowe summarised the work by Prickett (2001) that the most likely departure points for New Zealand were the Society, Cook, or Austral Islands, with the more distant Tuāmotus and Marquesas groups, even Mangareva or Pitcairn being possibilities. Consequently, one might expect the highest number of cognate names to be associated with the Society Islands or the southern Cook Islands if these islands were points of departure. Crowe (2012, 2013) found that in his survey of place names shared between New Zealand and eastern Polynesia the largest number of cognate place names were to be found in the Hawaiian Archipelago. He found this surprising in view of the large distance between New Zealand and Hawaii and all the more so because the origins of the Māori voyagers were thought to have originated in central eastern Polynesia. In an attempt to explain this feature, Crowe (2013, p. 21) raised the question, that despite the immense distances involved, whether there may have been direct contact one with the other in pre-European times. Crowe also found a high incidence of cognate names with Rapa Nui (Easter Island).

In this account three different methods of the application of cognate place names are employed in tracing possible links between Mehetia Island and New Zealand; the first two follow the work of Crowe (Crowe, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2018).

- Firstly, there is the total number of cognate toponyms. Crowe (2014, p. 15) found three for Mehetia but we have found a total of 22 (Table 4).
- Secondly, from the total number of toponyms found a statistical index was used by Crowe in order to rank linkages between various islands in the eastern Pacific and New Zealand. Based on an area of 2.3 km² for Mehetia and the recognition by Crowe (2014, p.15) of an index of 1.3, places Mehetia well ahead of other island groups in the Society Islands. Our index, based on 22 cognate toponyms recognised in New Zealand, is 9.6, which is in excess of all other indices throughout the eastern Pacific even allowing for dissent over some names that we have used.
- The third method employed in this account is the number of times that a cognate toponym is repeated in New Zealand, an aspect not investigated by Crowe. In this account we have found several cognate toponyms repeated in New Zealand at a surprisingly high number of times, not the least being Hikurangi/Hikuraki. This method is independent of the bulk number of cognates arrived at or the statistical index used based on land area of that island.

Thompson (2019, p. 95) writes:

For a Tahitian, the physical world was less like a set of discrete, objective phenomena and more like a web of connections in which gods, ancestors, humans, fish, birds, insects, rocks, clouds, winds, and stars were linked to one another genealogically.

This connectedness involving scoria blocks or rocks, place names, ancestors, gods, and humans with both sacred Mehetia Island and New Zealand is startling and suggests to us that there must have been a very significant link between the two localities in previous times. Both the island of *Ra'iātea* and the sacred marae of *Taputapuātea* are constantly referred to in Māori oral traditions, yet the name *Taputapuātea* appears but once in New Zealand place names near Whitianga and the name of the island *Ra'iātea* appears three times as *Rangiatea*. The index value for *Ra'iatea* and *Taha'a* combined provided by Crowe is 0.26 (Table 3).

In the case of the island of Mehetia, Torrente (2004) records that Tahitian oral

history says that this island was the final staging point for canoes sailing for New Zealand, an aspect of knowledge now apparently absent or lost to Māori oral traditions today. Whilst the high cognate place name index that we recognise for Mehetia Island does not prove a direct link with New Zealand, the combined evidence presented here is in our belief compelling for former links. Our research based on five lines of evidence supports the notion that the island of Mehetia was once much more important to early Polynesian navigators than is currently recognised:

- The importance of the highly sacred nature of the island and its volcanic cone, which rises some 435 m above sea level, in early Tahitian oral history;
- Tahitian oral traditions record the island of Mehetia as a final departure point for New Zealand (Torrente, 2004);
- the presence of shaped scoria blocks possibly derived from Mehetia and now found in secure Māori occupation sites in New Zealand (Ramsay *et al.*, 2021; Collett *et al.*, 2022);
- the very high index for cognate place names shared between Mehetia and New Zealand (this study); and
- this high index can now be coupled with the remarkably large number of times the island names (*Tuhua*, *Ahu Ahu*) and the volcanic peak (*Hi'ura'i*) are repeated in New Zealand.

These five aspects support the notion that Mehetia may have been an important voyaging hub, linking the Tahitian island group and possibly the Tuāmotus, Marquesas, Pitcairn, and Rapa Nui with New Zealand.

As Christophe Sand (pers. com. March, 2021) advises;

In the long run, the importance of a place in the homeland might have been lost, but the name remains.

Appendix 1

As noted above, numerous spellings of the current name of the island Mehetia in Western literature dates from the first expedition by Captain James Cook on

the HMS Endeavour. The ship arrived at Matavai Bay, Tahiti on 13 April 1769, and a local priest, maritime voyager, and member of the 'arioroi called Tupaia was taken on board. On leaving the Society Islands Tupaia supplied both Cook and the Endeavour's master, Robert Molyneaux with lists of island names to be found in the area. Fifty of the names recorded can be related to islands which we recognise today (Thompson, 2019). Consequently, various members of Cook's 'passengers' including both Joseph Banks and Daniel Solander commenced working with Tupaia to produce a chart of the islands of the eastern Pacific. Although the original map or maps appear no longer to exist, various copies and engravings are known (Piazza and Pearthree, 2007; Eckstein and Schwarz, 2019).

The best-known copy of Tupaia's chart or map is held by the British Library having been rediscovered amongst papers of Banks in the 1950s by John C. Beaglehole (Eckstein and Schwarz, 2019). Eckstein and Schwarz (2019) argue that this version is a fair copy of the third and final draft on which Tupaia worked in conjunction with others on board the Endeavour and not finalised before 5th February, 1770 while in New Zealand. In this copy the island of Mehetia is shown as *Mytea*.

Prior to the discovery of the Bank's chart the most widely accepted version was an engraving by William Fadden and commissioned by Johann Forster, the naturalist on Cook's second voyage. Eckstein and Schwarz (2019) regard this engraving as not being a faithful version of the original map by Tupaia, having been compiled by Forster years later. On this engraving the island of Mehetia is spelt Mæatéa. A third tangible copy of the map comes from a letter by George Forster to his publisher, Karl Philipp Spener dated 1st-3rd September, 1776 and here the island is spelt *Maatea* (Eckstein and Schwarz, 2019). In an island list taken from the second draft of Tupaia's chart and as recorded in Cook's journal and housed in the Mitchell State Library, NSW the island is given two names, these being *Mytea* and *Osnaberg Is*. A further spelling of Mehetia is preserved in Molyneux's master's log, now held in the National Archives, Kew. Here the spelling of the island is given as *Maiatea*.

In discussions with Anja Schwarz (pers. com., March 2021) she advises:

In Molyneux's list (which transcribes conversations with Tupaia), the

island name is Maiatea. This is also the name that Cook appears to have first recorded for the island (cf: Tupaia's list of islands recorded by James Cook but not included in his journal, transcribed in Johann Reinhold Forster's 'Insularium' at the Staatsbibliothek Berlin, MS Orient Oct. 62). On Tupaia's chart, the name is given as Mytea, a name that would be transcribed today as Maitea.

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梅海蒂亞島（社會群島）和紐西蘭之間的共享地名： 進一步認定該島為玻里尼西亞人航行到紐西蘭 的可能出發點

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摘要

兩個遙遠但相關的社會之間若有共享的地名，便可構成共同祖先的重要指標。紐西蘭（奧特亞羅瓦，Aotearoa）有個特點，在於與毛利人的起源之地：哈瓦基（Hawaiki）地區共享地名的數量。有項關於社會群島中梅海蒂亞島和紐西蘭之間共享地名的研究表示，依據梅海蒂亞土地面積指數（2.3平方公里）來看，兩者有大量的共享地名。梅海蒂亞上發現的同源地名指數（9.6）遠高於東太平洋的其他任何島嶼或群島。根據三塊出土的成形火山渣，最近的研究將神聖之島梅海蒂亞認定為某些玻里尼西亞航海者前往紐西蘭的可能出發點，其中一塊可能來自梅海蒂亞島，而另外兩塊是在紐西蘭南部的考古據點中發現，保存良好。有五條證據脈絡顯示梅海蒂亞島與紐西蘭有相關；梅海蒂亞島以及早期大溪地人視為神聖之地的希烏拉依峰（Hi'ura'i）；大溪地的口述傳統上認為該島是前往紐西蘭的航海起點；在紐西蘭早期的考古據點中發現了可能起源於該島的成形火山渣；目前發現有大量同源地名。有趣的是，此次發現梅海蒂亞島為早期玻里尼西亞航海者的啟航點，其潛在重要性似乎沒有反映在當前的毛利口述傳統中。

關鍵字：地名、梅海蒂亞島、紐西蘭、玻里尼西亞航海

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