

**On moa hunters and their tools:
Museum exchange and correspondence of
Adolf Bernhard Meyer (Dresden) and Julius von Haast (Christchurch)**

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Introduction

The *Museum für Völkerkunde Dresden* holds a fine collection of objects from New Zealand including stone tools chipped from larger rocks, similar to the stone tools found all over the world. Similar stone tools from Europe are dated to the Palaeolithic period. The collection of stone tools, likely used as instruments for cutting, were sent to Dresden in 1881 and 1882 by Julius von Haast (1822-1887), director of the Canterbury Museum in Christchurch. In exchange, Haast received objects from Adolf Bernhard Meyer (1840-1911), director of the Royal Zoological and Anthropological-Ethnographic Museum Dresden, as additions to the collections of the Canterbury Museum.¹

Today, these stone tools from New Zealand are in storage among the museum collections and not on public display, as they may not appear to be as typically characteristic of Māori culture as the wooden carvings and polished stone objects from more recent periods. Haast, however, recognised the significance to these artefacts. In the 1870s, they were the basis for an at times intense dispute between New Zealand's leading scientists, which had repercussions as far away as Europe. It was about a counter-thesis to the now generally accepted idea of New Zealand's settlement history. The starting point of the debate at the time was the question of who exterminated the moa, a flightless giant bird (Dinornithiformes), and when.

Julius von Haast

Johann Franz Julius Haast was born in Bonn on 1 May 1822.² He did not complete formal academic studies at the university there, but did acquire some knowledge of mining and geology. He became interested in rocks and minerals at an early age. Little information has survived about his life in Germany.³ He travelled extensively and stayed in London for some time. In 1858, the English

1 This paper is a translation by the author of revised and updated research originally published in German. See Christine Schlott, C 2021. Über Moa-Jäger und ihre Werkzeuge. Der Austausch zwischen Adolph Bernhard Meyer (Dresden) und Julius von Haast (Christchurch). *Abhandlungen und Berichte der Staatlichen Ethnographischen Sammlungen Sachsen* 55: 2020, pp.51-69.

2 Julius Haast was not born into the nobility, but was only knighted by the Austrian Emperor in 1875. Since then his name has been Julius von Haast.

3 Compare Rodney Fisher, Sir Julius von Haast. In: James N Bade, ed., *Eine Welt für sich. Deutschsprachige Siedler und Reisende in Neuseeland im neunzehnten Jahrhundert*. Bremen: Edition Temmen, 1998, pp. 195-202. The most important source on the life of Julius von Haast is the biography of his son: Heinrich Ferdinand von Haast. *The Life and Times of Julius von Haast: explorer, geologist, museum builder*. Wellington 1948. Other sources include: Peter B. Maling. 'Haast, Johann Franz Julius von', *Dictionary of New Zealand Biography*, first published in 1990, updated October, 2017. Te Ara - the Encyclopedia of New Zealand,

shipping company Willis Gann & Co. commissioned him to travel to New Zealand to examine the islands with respect to their suitability for the settlement of German immigrants.⁴ Haast arrived in Auckland on 21 December 1858 on the ship *Evening Star*, one day before the Austrian frigate *Novara* arrived there.⁵ On board the *Novara* was, among others, the geologist Ferdinand Hochstetter, who took leave from the expedition at the request of the New Zealand government and stayed in New Zealand until October 1859 to search for gold, coal, and other mineral resources in both islands. Hochstetter and Haast met shortly after both landed and Hochstetter invited Haast to join him as his assistant and companion for his explorations in New Zealand.⁶ During their joint ventures, Haast expanded his geological knowledge so that he was able to undertake further geological expeditions on his own after Hochstetter's departure. In 1861, he was employed by the Canterbury Provincial Government as Provincial Geologist. During the following years, he explored his new surroundings in Canterbury and Westland, in the South Island of New Zealand, and collected fossils, plants and birds. Many places on the South Island bear his name today, such as the Haast Pass, the Haast River and the township of Haast on the west coast. He himself named places after natural scientists or patrons he appreciated, such as the Franz Josef Glacier, after the Austrian Emperor, who rewarded him with a knighthood in 1875.⁷

Learned societies and professional networking

Haast was one of the founders of the Philosophical Institute of Canterbury in Christchurch in 1862, which aimed to encourage the scientifically interested inhabitants of the region to exchange ideas.

Haast carried on an extensive correspondence with scholars in Europe and America. His exchange with his old homeland was extensive. His correspondents in Germany included the Dresden physician, artist, natural philosopher and president of the “Leopoldinisch-Carolinische Akademie der Naturforscher Leopoldina”, Carl Gustav Carus and his son Gustav Albert, the ornithologist Otto Finsch, the shipowner Johann Caesar Godeffroy, the Berlin engineer Franz Reuleaux and the Dresden museum director Adolf Bernhard Meyer.⁸

<https://teara.govt.nz/en/biographies/1h1/haast-johann-franz-julius-von> (accessed 14 November 2022); Wolfhart Langer. Der Bonner Neuseelandforscher Sir Johann Franz Julius von Haast (1822-1887). In: Bonner Heimat- und Geschichtsverein (ed.): *Bonner Geschichtsblätter*. 39, Bonn 1989, pp. 273–293 as well as https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Julius_von_Haast (accessed 14 November 2022). Simon Thode is very critical of Haast and his life in Germany. Among other things, he doubts Haast's aborted geology studies. (See Simon Thode: Bones and words in 1870s New Zealand: the moa-hunter debate through actor networks. In: *The British Journal of the History of Science*, Vol. 42, Issue 02, June 2009, pp. 225-244, p. 230).

4 See: Maling, <https://teara.govt.nz/en/biographies/1h1/haast-johann-franz-julius-von> (accessed 14 November 2022)

5 The *Novara* Expedition was a large-scale circumnavigation of the globe by the Austrian navy in 1857-59, prepared by the Imperial Academy of Sciences in Vienna. Its highly regarded scientific results were published in a multi-volume work (20 volumes in total).

6 See Maling, <https://teara.govt.nz/en/biographies/1h1/haast-johann-franz-julius-von> (accessed 14 November 2022)

7 See Maling, <https://teara.govt.nz/en/biographies/1h1/haast-johann-franz-julius-von> (accessed 14 November 2022).

8 The inward correspondence of Haast is held in the collections of the Alexander Turnbull Library in Wellington, and the author accessed the archived microfilm copies in the preparation of this paper. See Haast family: Collection, ATL-Group-00475.

With many of his correspondents, he exchanged New Zealand bird skins, fossils (especially bones of extinct birds) rock samples, and plants for similar items from other parts of the world. In this way Haast was able to build up a considerable collection, which was to form the nucleus of the Canterbury Museum founded in 1867. Haast was the founding director and the first dedicated museum building was opened in 1870.⁹

Moa bones

His biggest asset and most valuable currency for exchanges were the moa bones from a swamp at Glenmark Station, generously made available to him by the runholder George Henry Moore (1812-1905) in 1866. Moore had found a large quantity of bones of the extinct giant birds in a swamp on his land at Glenmark Station in Canterbury, known as the Glenmark Swamp, and had granted Haast access to the site and the bones, as well as offering help with the excavation.¹⁰ Haast estimated that the find in the swamp was the bones of about one thousand moa and countless other birds.

Since the first bones of the giant ratite were discovered in New Zealand, there has been a great interest among European and New Zealand scientists to examine them and acquire them for their collections.¹¹ Like the bird skins of the New Zealand bird population, which had been rapidly decimated by introduced European predators such as rats, cats, weasels, etc., these bones were coveted objects in the international trade.

Moa-hunters and their tools

In New Zealand itself, a heated debate broke out in the 1870s between two different camps about who might have been the first inhabitants of New Zealand and since when the moa had become extinct. This so-called moa hunter debate arose after Julius Haast gave a lecture¹² to the Philosophical Institute of Canterbury in March 1871 in which he argued that the first settlement of New Zealand could be attributed to a Palaeolithic non-Māori indigenous population that had also wiped out the moa. As evidence for his thesis, he used stone tools that had been found at various sites where moa had been dismembered and eaten. These were raw stone chips of quartzite, flint and slate, which were not comparable to the finely polished stone tools used by the Māori in the nineteenth century.

A camp of the so-called Moa hunters with a large number of stone implements was found in 1869 at the mouth of the Rakaia River south of Christchurch. Earth ovens were spread over an area of 20 acres of land [approx. 81,000 m²] and the bones of moa and other animals were piled up into rubbish heaps or middens.¹³ Haast referred to this site in his 1871 publication of the above lecture in the *Transactions and Proceedings of the New Zealand Institute* in the same year. He wrote:

9 See Fisher, 1998, p. 199-201; Thode 2009, p. 230; Maling; <https://teara.govt.nz/en/biographies/1h1/haast-johann-franz-julius-von>.

10 See Thode 2009, p. 230.

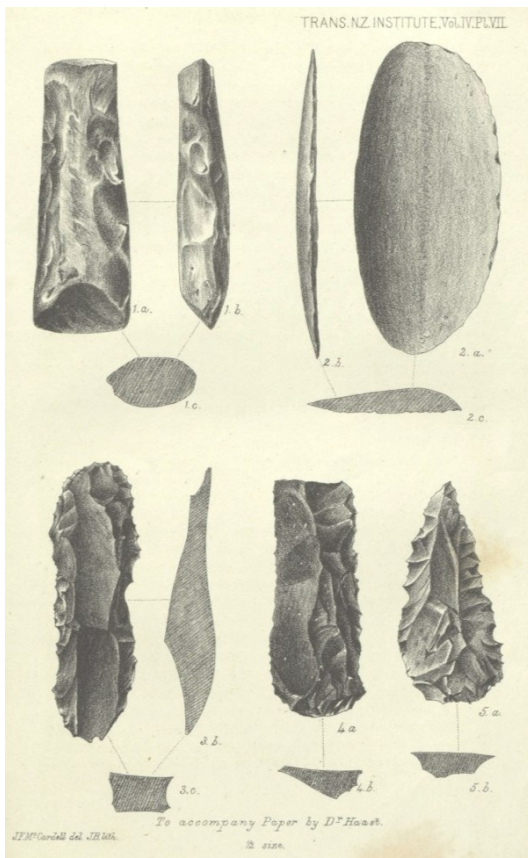
11 The first reconstruction of the possible appearance of the moas from only a few bones was achieved by the physician, biologist and palaeontologist Richard Owen (1804-1892) in the 1840s, curator of the "Hunterian Collection" in the "Royal College of Surgeons", London, and later head of the natural history collection at the British Museum. Owen later initiated the foundation of the Museum of Natural History in London. See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Richard_Owen, (accessed 14 November 2022).

12 The lecture was published in *Transactions and Proceedings of the New Zealand Institute*, 1871, vol. 4, pp. 66-90.

13 See Duff 1977, p. 195.

‘Scattered over the ground an enormous quantity of pieces of flint are strewed, proving that the manufacture of rude knives or flakes must have been carried on upon the spot for a considerable period of time. The most primitive form of stone implement, and of which a great number is found lying all over the ploughed ground, consist of fragments of hard silicious sandstone, broken off apparently with a single blow from large boulders, and for the manufacture of which considerable skill must have been necessary. The boulder was always selected in such a form that if fractured in the right way it would yield a sharp cutting edge. [...] These primitive knives are mostly three to four inches long and two to three inches broad, possessing a sharp cutting and sometimes serrated edge; but there are also some of larger dimensions, being six inches long and nearly four inches broad. Some of them have evidently been much used. They were probably employed for cutting up the spoil of the chase, and severing the sinews’.¹⁴

From the fact that some tools made of obsidian, which only exists on the North Island, were also found in the South Island and that, on the other hand, moa bones of the same kind as on the South Island were also discovered in the North, Haast concluded that the Cook Strait, which separates the two islands, could not have existed at the time of the Moa hunters. Since the makers of the stone knives found would have been at “such a low state of civilisation”¹⁵, they would have been hard pressed to build boats to get from island to island. He wrote:



‘In any case, we may safely conclude that the human races in the southern hemisphere are of far greater antiquity than might appear at first sight, and, instead of migrations, possible and impossible, to explain the peopling and re-peopling of New Zealand, geological changes might afford a more satisfactory explanation. If we admit the former existence of land in the Pacific Ocean, either as a continent or large island, where now the boundless ocean rolls, and if we further suppose this land inhabited by *autochthones*, of whom we find remnants all over the island, either still existing or extinct, and only proving their former existence by their works of art, the whole problem is solved. Such an explanation is, moreover, in better accordance with the present state of geological and ethnological science’.¹⁶

Plate VII (actually Plate IV) showing Maori-implements in Haast (1871).

14 Haast 1871a, vol. 4, p. 82f.

15 Haast 1871b, p. 84.

16 Haast 1871b, p. 84, emphasis in the original.

He compared the stone knives found with the “post-Pliocene”¹⁷ stone tools found in France and other areas of Europe and concluded that the moa was a contemporary of the giant animals of this epoch in the northern hemisphere.¹⁸

Haast explained the nephrite axes and polished stone tools found at such camps (although these are completely absent from the Rakaia), as used by the Māori as late as the nineteenth century, by the fact that the later immigrants had used the same campsites. Haast concluded that they were not responsible for the extinction of the moa because the giant bird did not appear in Māori mythology:

Another argument in favour of this supposition, that the *Dinornis* must have become extinct much earlier than we might infer from the occurrence of bones lying amongst the grass, is the fact proved abundantly by careful inquiries, that the Maoris know nothing whatever about these huge birds, although various statements have been made to the contrary, lately repeated in England ...¹⁹

He referred to the work of the missionary and naturalist William Colenso (1811-1899), who arrived in New Zealand 1834, and had found that, with the exception of a few people, there was little knowledge of the moa among the Māori population.²⁰

Haast versus Hector

Haast's opponent in this controversy was James Hector (1834-1907), Director of the New Zealand Geological Survey and head of the New Zealand Institute in Wellington. Hector, a Scot who studied medicine in Edinburgh but also attended lectures in zoology and geology, took part in an expedition to western Canada in 1857. His good reputation after this expedition earned him membership of the Royal Society of Edinburgh and the Royal Geographical Society. In 1861 he was nominated for the post of Director of the Geological Survey of Otago. Hector went ashore in Dunedin in 1862, just as the city was becoming New Zealand's largest due to the discovery of gold in Otago. When Hector was appointed director of New Zealand Geological Survey, he went to Wellington, which became the new capital of New Zealand after Auckland.²¹

Hector and his followers held that the Moa hunters were the ancestors of today's Māori. In the same volume of the *Transactions* in which Haast expounded his theory, Hector published the lecture he had given to the members of the Otago Institute in September 1871.²² He was convinced that all the objects found at the ancient campsites - bones of moa, dogs and humans, rough and polished stone tools - belonged together. He took the large quantity of eggshells at the camp sites as evidence that

17 Haast 1871b, p. 84.

18 Haast probably meant the Pleistocene, the ice age that followed the Pliocene. The Pliocene began circa 5.3 million years ago and ended circa 2.5 million years ago. Typical representatives of European fauna at this time were mammoths, big cats, rhinoceroses, gazelles, giraffes, etc.
see <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pliocene>, (accessed 14 November 2022).

14 However, there were no humans at that time. *Homo sapiens* did not migrate to Europe until about 40,000 years ago. The Pleistocene began about 2.5 million years ago and ended around 10,000 BCE, with the last ice age. Some of the large mammals of Europe (e.g. the mammoths) had survived until then. (See <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pleistocene>, (accessed 14 November 2022).

19 Haast 1871, p. 71.

20 Colenso 1846, pp. 81-107.

21 See Thode 2009, p. 231.

22 Hector 1871, pp. 110-120.

moa eggs must have been a great delicacy, and that excessive consumption of them had caused the bird to die out very quickly.²³

Haast countered that finding moa bones, eggshells and polished stone tools in the same place was not proof that they were also connected. It could not be proven that the Māori had not visited the same place later. Any similarity between the Māori and Moa hunter camps would only mean that the Moa hunters had come to New Zealand from Polynesia in an earlier wave of immigration and thus had a similar cultural background, but differed in the degree of 'civilisation' they had achieved.²⁴

This debate was very heated throughout the 1870s and only ended after Haast's death in 1887. It is not within scope here to discuss the entire debate, which has been well documented and evaluated elsewhere.²⁵ Rather, the aim here is to show the theoretical background against which the inclusion of the rough-hewn stone tools from the Rakaia estuary and Shag Point²⁶, another large Moa hunter camp, in the collection of the Dresden Ethnological Museum took place.

Correspondence and exchanges

How the exchange of letters and objects between Julius von Haast and Adolf Bernhard Meyer, the first director of the Royal Zoological and Anthropological-Ethnographic Museum Dresden, came about can unfortunately no longer be completely reconstructed, as the correspondence has not been preserved in its entirety. Some of the letters from Meyer to Haast are held in the Haast family Collection in the Alexander Turnbull Library, in Wellington.²⁷ Some of Haast's letters to Meyer, on the other hand, are preserved in the "Sächsisches Staatsarchiv Dresden" [State Archive of Saxony in Dresden].²⁸

From the letter that Meyer addressed to Haast on 22 June 1880 in response to the latter's letter of April of the same year, which unfortunately is not available, it can be seen that Haast had invited Meyer to enter into scientific exchange with him and had offered him artefacts and other objects from New Zealand. Meyer was expecting a consignment from Haast at the time of his letter, which was to include a preserved *Nestor* parrot and Māori hair samples.²⁹

23 Hector 1871, p. 116. A similar conclusion was reached by an international group of researchers who examined moa bones and eggshells with state-of-the-art equipment. See Oskam et al. 2012, pp. 41-48.

24 Haast 1871b, p. 105.

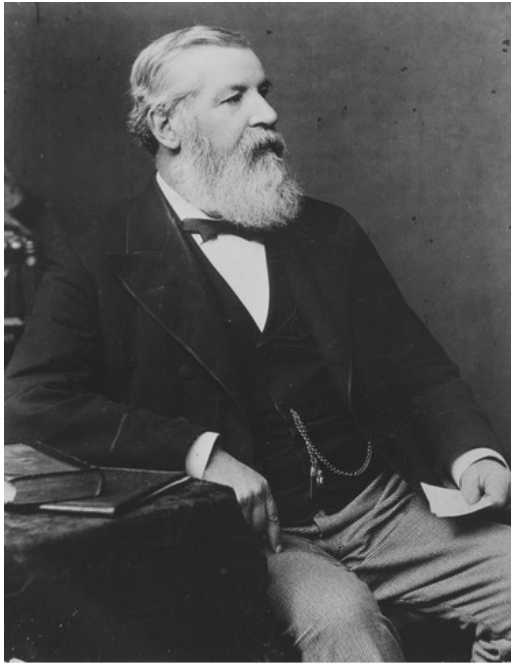
25 See Thode 2009, where further sources for analysing the debate can be found.

26 Shag Point is at the mouth of the Shag River on the southern east coast of the South Island in Otago. Later, a large-scale archaeological excavation was carried out there. The finds made are preserved in the Otago Museum. See Skinner 1924, pp. 11-24; Teviotdale 1924, pp. 1-10.

27 Letters from Meyer to Haast are held in the Alexander Turnbull Library, see: Adolf Bernhard Meyer MS-Papers-0037-201 (See <https://tiaki.natlib.govt.nz/#details=ecatalogue.74015>).

28 Sächsisches Staatsarchiv, File Senckenberg / Museum für Tierkunde, Nr. 30, Briefwechsel, wissenschaftliche Korrespondenz, 1880-1890, without page reference.

29 A later letter dated 25 January 1881 (see below), in which Meyer thanks him for the hair samples and the *Nestor* parrot (Kaka), shows that he had ordered both.



Left: Portrait of Sir Julius von Haast (1822-1887), by Alexander Bassano, London, 1886 (Alexander Turnbull Library, PAColl-5381). **Right:** Portrait of Adolf Bernhard Meyer (1840-1911), photographer unknown. (Archive of the Staatliche Ethnographische Sammlungen Sachsen).

Meyer wrote:

„Dresden, 22. Juni 1880

Kzool. Mus.

Hochgeehrter Herr College,

freundlichen Dank für Ihre Zeilen vom 23. April & Ihr gütiges Angebot.

Von Neuseeland wären ethnographische Objekte von Nephrit, Knochen etc. sowie alles Ethnographische (Schnitzereien in Holz) & Anthropologische für diese Abteilungen des unter meiner Leitung stehenden Museums sehr erwünscht & findet sich gewiss unter unseren Doubletten (speciell Neu Guinea) manches dagegen für Sie.

Es soll mich herzlich freuen, mit Ihnen in wissenschaftlichen Verkehr zu treten & danke ich für jetzt schon im Voraus für den Nestor meridionalis³⁰ in Spiritus & für die Maori Haare.

Stets gern zu ihren Diensten bin ich mit ausgezeichnete Hochachtung

Ihr ergebenster

AB Meyer³¹

[Dresden, 22 June 1880

R[oyal] Zool[ogical] Mus[eum].

Most esteemed Colleague,

Kind thanks for your letter of 23 April and your kind offer.

30 The *Nestor meridionalis* or Kaka is the second surviving Nestor parrot in New Zealand, along with the Kea.

31 MS-Papers-0037-201-01, Alexander Turnbull Library.

From New Zealand, ethnographic objects of nephrite, bone etc. as well as everything ethnographic (carvings in wood) & anthropological for these departments of the museum under my direction, would be very desirable and certainly among our duplicates (especially from New Guinea) some things can be found for you.

It shall give me great pleasure to enter into scientific communication with you & I thank you in anticipation for the *Nestor meridionalis* in alcohol and for the Māori hair.

Always gladly at your service, I remain,

Your most devoted

AB Meyer]

Unfortunately, the corresponding letter of reply is not extant. On 11 October 1880, Meyer wrote another letter to Haast in which he formulated object requests for the Dresden Museum:

„Dresden, 11. Oct. 1880

Kzool. Anthr. & Ethn. Mus.

Verehrtester Herr College,

Ich wage eine kühne Bitte im Interesse unseres jungen Ethnographischen Museums.

Ist es möglich, ein gutes Nephrit Tiki Tiki sowie ein großes Mere von Nephrit & Steinbeile aus demselben Material, sowie ein Stück Rohmaterial von Nephrit (wenn auch klein) zu erhalten?

Mir ist wohl bekannt dass es schon lange schwer hält [sic] diese Objekte von den Eingeborenen zu erhalten, allein besitzt nicht Ihr Museum Doubletten? Ich bin sicher daß unsere Regierung ein Opfer nicht scheuen würde um diese Objekte zu erwerben & daß sie Ihre Bemühungen daraufhin auch zu schätzen wissen wird.

Endlich nenne ich noch Hatteria³² als Desiderat!

In der Hoffnung, daß Sie mir diese Wünsche nicht versagen wollen & daß es möglich sein wird, wenn auch nicht alle, so doch einige zu befriedigen verbleibe ich ganz zu Ihren Diensten

Ihr hochachtungsvollst ergeb.

A.B. Meyer³³

[Dresden, 11 Oct[ober] 1880

R[oyal] Zool[ogical], Anthr[opological] & Ethn[ographic] Mus[eum].

Most esteemed Colleague,

I take the liberty of making a bold request in the interests of our young Ethnographic Museum.

Is it possible to obtain a good nephrite tiki tiki as well as a large mere of nephrite, and stone axes of the same material, as well as a piece of raw nephrite (albeit small)?

I am well aware that it has long been difficult to obtain these objects from the indigenous peoples, but does not your museum possess duplicates? I am sure that our government would not hesitate to make a sacrifice to acquire these objects and that it will appreciate your efforts.

32 Hatteria is a synonym for *Sphenodon punctatus* Tuatara.

33 MS-Papers-0037-201-02, Alexander Turnbull Library.

Finally, I mention Hatteria as a desideratum!

In the hope that you will not deny me these wishes & that it will be possible, if not all, at least to satisfy some, I remain at your service.

Yours most respectfully.

A.B. Meyer]

By the end of 1880, the desired hair samples had arrived in Dresden. Meyer thanked him for this in his next letter. In Dresden he had begun to build up an extensive collection of hair samples from all over the world. The *Nestor* parrot, however, seems to have been delayed in arriving:

„Dresden, 25. Januar 1881,

K. Zool. Anthr. & Ethn Mus

Verehrtester Herr College,

Herzlichen Dank im Namen des Museums für die gütige Übersendung der Maori Haarprobe. Ich bedauere daß Sie Mühe davon hatten, allein um so schätzenswerther sind mir diese Proben.³⁴

Es ist zu wichtig dgl. zu besitzen, denn wenn man sieht wie die meisten Anthropolog. Schriftsteller über die Haare der Menschenrassen schreiben & Theoreme aufbauen ohne die Objecte zu kennen, so gruselt's Einem.

[...] Herren Shaw, Savill & Co London habe ich geschrieben wegen der Kiste mit Nestor in Spiritus & werde Ihnen nach Empfang berichten. Jedenfalls im Voraus besten Dank. Sollten Sie so gütig & überhaupt geneigt sein unserem Museum von dort Einiges zukommen zu lassen so werde ich einen speciellen Bericht darüber an die Regierung aufmachen und bin sicher daß dieselbe Ihnen ihre Anerkennung nicht versagen wird.

Ich erwähnte in meinem letzten Schreiben schon Einiges & Sie haben die Güte zu sagen daß sie nach Rückkehr der S[amm]l[un]gen aus Melbourne sehen wollten ob Sie uns etwas zuweisen könnten. Das wäre ja sehr schön, da wir von Neuseeland schlecht vertreten sind. Es fehlen uns alle Schnitzwerke, alle Steinwaffen & Idole nebst deren Rohmaterial – Alles zu wichtige & unentbehrliche Objecte. Von Zoologischen Desideraten nannte ich schon Hatteria & Sie fragen wegen Dinornis Resten³⁵ gütigst an.

Ich kaufte vor einigen Jahren von Dr Finsch Reste folgender Arten:

Dinornis maximus 1 Bein ohne Fuss nur 4 Wirbel

Dinornis gracilis 2 Beine ohne Füße und ein paar Wirbel

Meionornis didiformis Beine, Becken, und einige Wirbel

Meionornis casuarinus ziemlich vollständig

Palapteryx elephantopus³⁶ 1 Bein

Euryapteryx rheides ziemlich gut.

Sie sehen also, daß wir eigentlich nur von 2 Arten passabele [sic] Ex. besitzen & daher für Alles Weitere sehr dankbar wären.

34 Haast sent hair samples from Māori living in Christchurch, including several children. Since the head, and hair in particular, are tapu for Māori - sacred and must not be touched - it was very difficult to get traditionally living Māori to cut off their hair and give it away. See Best 1934, p. 84.

35 Moa bones.

36 Described and named by Haast, synonym for *Pachyornis elephantopus*.

Ich empfehle unser Museum in Bezug auf Alles die Moas Betreffende ganz speciell Ihrer Fürsorge da man fürchten muss je länger man es aufschiebt sich damit zu versehen, daß es desto schwieriger werden wird.

Kann ich Ihnen mit irgend etwas dienlich sein so bitte ich ganz über mich zu verfügen. Von Neu Guinea Vögeln z. B. besitzen wir schöne Doubletten aber auch sonst bin ich bereit Ihren Wünschen nach Kräften nachzukommen.

*Mit dem Ausdrücke freundschaftlichster Hochachtung
Ihr ganz ergebener*

*AB Meyer*³⁷

[Dresden, 25 January 1881,

R[oyal] Zool[ogical], Anthr[opological] & Ethn[ographic] Mus[eum].

Most esteemed Colleague,

Thank you very much on behalf of the museum for kindly sending the Maori hair samples. I regret that you have had trouble with them, but they are all the more valuable to me.

It is too important to have them, because when you see how most anthropologists write about the hair of the ethnic groups of people and construct theorems without knowing the objects, one is naturally concerned.

[...] I have written to Messrs Shaw, Savill & Co in London about the box with Nestor in alcohol and will report to you on receipt. In any case, my best thanks in advance. Should you be so kind and feel inclined to send our museum something from there, I will make a special report about it to the government and am sure that they will not deny you their recognition.

I already mentioned some things in my last letter and you have the goodness to say that after the return of the [exhibits] from Melbourne you would see if you could allocate something to us. That would be very nice as we are sparsely represented by New Zealand. We lack all carvings, all stone weapons and idols together with their raw material - all too important and indispensable objects. Of zoological desiderata I have already mentioned Hatteria & you kindly inquire about Dinornis remains.

Some years ago I bought remains of the following species from Dr Finsch:

Dinornis maximus 1 leg without foot only 4 vertebrae

Dinornis gracilis 2 legs without feet and only a few vertebrae

Meionornis didiformis legs, pelvis, only a few vertebrae

Meionornis casuarinus quite complete

Palapteryx elephantophus 1 leg

Euryapteryx rheides pretty well

As you can see, we actually possess only passable specimens of two species and would therefore be very grateful for anything further.

37 MS-Papers-0037-201-03, Alexander Turnbull Library.

I entrust our museum in relation to everything concerning the moa quite specifically to your care as one must fear that the longer one puts it off, the more difficult it will become.

If I can be of service to you with anything, I am completely at your disposal. We have beautiful duplicates of New Guinea birds, but I am also prepared to do my utmost to meet your wishes.

With the expression of the most friendly esteem

Yours sincerely,

AB Meyer]

In the letter quoted above, Meyer explicitly asks for bones of the moa, which had meanwhile become popular museum display items in Europe. Haast sent to the Dresden Museum the objects he wanted, as far as he was able. These were divided among the museum's various departments of natural history, ethnology and anthropology. In exchange, he also received a considerable number of pieces from Meyer for his museum. Since the Royal Zoological and Anthropological-Ethnographic Museum Dresden was later separated into the Museum of Natural History and a Museum of Ethnology, the collections are today spread over two buildings.

The files of the Dresden ethnological collection contain the receipt of the objects received from Haast in 1881 with some additions from the following year:

“2 Nephrit-Meissel von Neu Seeland

1 Nephrit Tiki von Neu Seeland

*1 Nephrit Block von Neu Seeland*³⁸

2 Steinbeile von Viti

1 Steinbeil von Salomo Inseln

2 Maori Steinmesser

2 Abgüsse von Maori Steinmessern

1 Maori Schädel

*10 Haarproben*³⁹

Tausch von Haast 1882

*70 Steinsplitter*⁴⁰ *(zu Dinornis-Resten gehörig)*⁴¹

[2 Nephrite chisels from New Zealand

1 Nephrite tiki from New Zealand

1 Nephrite block from New Zealand

2 stone axes from Viti

1 Stone axe from Solomon Islands

2 Maori stone knives

38 According to the accession record, the nephrite block was later given to the mineralogical museum, Dresden, in exchange in 1907.

39 The skull and the specimens of human hair are held in the Anthropological Collection of the Museum für Völkerkunde Dresden.

40 The tools of the Moa hunters were given to the museum together with moa bones. Today, however, there are two more than mentioned here in the collection of the Ethnological Museum.

41 Accession records of the Museum für Völkerkunde zu Dresden to 1945, H1_0004_a.

2 casts of Maori stone knives
1 Maori skull
10 hair samples

Exchange from Haast 1882
70 stone chips (belonging with *Dinornis* remains)].



a. Nephrite mere, Canterbury, South Island, New Zealand, made by the 68-year-old Tamata Tikao Mahia from Wainui near Christchurch in eight years of work, sent to Dresden by Julius von Haast in 1882. (See *Königliches Ethnographisches Museum zu Dresden. III. Jadeit- und Nephrit-Objecte. P. 58*) (*Museum für Völkerkunde Dresden, cat. no. 5086,1*). **b.** Nephrite adze, Rangiora, Canterbury, South Island New Zealand. "The small axe was sent to us by Mr. v. Haast in 1881, and comes from Massacre Pa near Rangiora on South Island." (*Königliches Ethnographisches Museum zu Dresden. III. Jadeit- und Nephrit-Objecte. P. 59*) (*Museum für Völkerkunde Dresden, cat. no. 5087,1*). **c.** Nephrite adze, Kaikoura, South Island New Zealand. "From a grave on the Kaikoura Peninsula in the north-east of the South Island. By Mr. v. Haast, 1881. It is remarkable that nephrite axes were placed in the grave as precious possessions." (*Königliches Ethnographisches Museum zu Dresden. III. Jadeit- und Nephrit-Objecte. P. 59*) (*Museum für Völkerkunde Dresden, cat. no. 5088,2*).



*Tiki, pendant, nephrite, South Island , sent to Dresden
by Julius von Haast.
(Museum für Völkerkunde Dresden, cat. no. 5096,1).*

Meyer's wish to obtain the generally sought-after objects made of nephrite was thus fulfilled as late as 1881. He published them in 1883 in Volume III of the publications of the Dresden Museum under the title *Jadeit- und Nephrit-Objecte. B. Asien, Oceanien und Afrika*.⁴²

Although Meyer shows interest in everything concerning the moa in his letter of January 1881, it is difficult to see this as anything more than a zoological desire to collect, for only the remains of the bird were difficult to obtain, not the crude stone tools of the Moa hunters. It is not possible to reconstruct from the correspondence whether Haast sent these tools in 1882 on his own initiative as an advance payment for a desired acquisition or whether there was a corresponding request from Meyer's side. They were not published. However, they are listed individually in the inventory catalogue. The items in question are:

- 1 Steinmesser der Moajäger, Süd Rakaia, Canterbury, Südinsel*
- 1 Steinmesser der Moajäger, Nord Rakaia, Canterbury, Südinsel*
- 4 Steinmesser der Moajäger, Neue Mündung des Rakaia, Canterbury, Südinsel*
- 48 Steingeräte der Moajäger (Messer?), Shag Point, Otago, Südinsel*
- 10 Steinmesser der Moajäger, Shag Point, Otago, Südinsel*
- 3 Bruchstücke von Steinmessern der Moajäger, Shag Point, Otago, Südinsel*
- 2 Steinmesser der Moajäger, Shag Point/ Shag River, Otago, Südinsel*
- 1 Axtklinge (?) der Moajäger, Shag Point, Otago, Südinsel*
- 2 Steingeräte (Abfall?) der Moajäger, Shag Point, Otago, Südinsel*

- [1 Moa hunter Stone Knife, South Rakaia, Canterbury, South Island
- 1 Moa hunter stone knife, North Rakaia, Canterbury, South Island
- 4 Moa hunter stone knives, New Mouth of the Rakaia, Canterbury, South Island
- 48 Moa hunter stone implements (knives?), Shag Point, Otago, South Island

⁴² Meyer 1883, pp. 58-63, plate 6, fig. 1-6.

- 10 stone knives of the Moa hunters, Shag Point, Otago, South Island
- 3 fragments of stone knives of the Moa hunters, Shag Point, Otago, South Island
- 2 stone knives of the Moa hunters, Shag Point/ Shag River, Otago, South Island
- 1 axe blade (?) of the Moa hunters, Shag Point, Otago, South Island
- 2 stone tools (waste?) of the Moa hunters, Shag Point, Otago, South Island]



a. Stone tool (knife?) of the moa hunters, quartzite, Shag Point, Otago, South Island New Zealand, sent to Dresden by Julius von Haast 1882. (Museum für Völkerkunde Dresden, cat. no. 12222,1).



b. Stone tool (knife?) of the moa hunters, quartzite, Shag Point, Otago, South Island New Zealand, sent to Dresden by Julius von Haast 1882. (Museum für Völkerkunde Dresden, cat. no. 12223,1).



c. Stone tool (knife?) of the moa hunters, quartzite, Shag Point, Otago, South Island New Zealand, sent to Dresden by Julius von Haast 1882. (Museum für Völkerkunde Dresden, cat. no. 12224,1).

In exchange for Haast's consignments to Dresden, Meyer sent archaeological artefacts from Europe and America as well as bird skins (parrots and kingfishers, including very rare specimens), 128 objects in all, at the latter's express request. A list of the objects sent is enclosed with the letter to Haast that Meyer wrote on 22 December 1882.⁴³ Meyer estimated the value of the consignment at 1000 Marks. The box was sent from Hamburg to London and from there shipped to New Zealand with the New Zealand Shipping Company.

The archaeological objects Meyer sent to Christchurch were: 43 stone axes from Schleswig, 3 stone axes from Zeeland, 2 stone axes from the island of Rügen, 2 stone axes from Osterfeld, 2 stone axes from Germany, 1 cast of a stone axe from Mexico (the original of which is kept in the Dresden Museum), 3 archaic pottery from Lusatia, 3 archaic pottery from Serkowitz near Dresden, 3 archaic pottery from Tolkewitz near Dresden, and 3 archaic pottery from Schleswig.⁴⁴

In a letter Meyer dated - possibly erroneously - as 3 June 1883, he expresses his gratitude for the moa bones and stone implements and promises to send archaeological artefacts in return. However, he points out the difficulties in procuring such by exchange for Haast - quite obviously, because they were not in scope of the Dresden museum's collections.

⁴³ MS-Papers-0037-201-06, Alexander Turnbull Library.

⁴⁴ As is evident from Meyer's letter to Haast dated 3 June 1883, Meyer had procured these prehistoric objects especially for the exchange, as the Dresden Museum did not collect archaeological objects.

„Dresden, den 3. Juni 1883⁴⁵

K Museum

Verehrtester Herr v. Haast

Ich empfang Ihr w[erthe]s Schreiben vom 11 April nachdem wenige Tage vorher die Sendung Moa Reste und sonstige praehistorische Sachen eingetroffen waren für welche ich Ihnen verbindlichsten Dank sage. [...]

Ich werde als nächstes eine Sendung ethnologischer Objecte aus Afrika, Asien & Amerika an Sie abgehen lassen. Leider haben Sie mir wegen des Tellers von Meißener Porzellan nicht wieder geschrieben so daß ich ihn nicht beipacken kann. – Praehistorische Objekte kann ich schwerer erhalten im Tausche doch will ich sehen was ich thun kann & sollen Sie jedenfalls durch meine Sendung zufriedengestellt sein. Zool. Sachen zu senden wird mir allerdings leichter. Endlich habe ich viele Doubletten von Vögeln von Neuguinea, Celebes etc., zweitens Nester und Eier hiesiger Vögel die Sie doch wohl dort nicht haben im Museum. Also über diese können Sie wenn Sie wollen mich noch informieren [...].

Mit herzlichen Grüßen Ihr aufrichtigst ergeb

*AB Meyer*⁴⁶

[Dresden, 3 June 1883

R[oyal] Museum

Dear Mr von Haast

I received your esteemed letter of 11 April a few days after the arrival of the consignment of moa remains and other prehistoric objects for which I thank you most sincerely [...].

Next I will send you a consignment of ethnological objects from Africa, Asia and America. Unfortunately, you have not written to me again about the plate of Meissen porcelain so that I cannot enclose it. - It is more difficult for me to obtain prehistoric objects in exchange, but I will see what I can do and you shall in any case be satisfied by my consignment. Zoological specimens, however will be easier for me to send. Finally I have many duplicates of birds from New Guinea, Celebes etc., secondly nests and eggs of local birds which you probably do not have there in the museum. So you can still let me know about these if you wish [...].

With best wishes, your sincerely devoted,

AB Meyer]

From the chronological sequence, Haast's letter, to which Meyer refers here, should have been sent as early as April 1882, because the desired ethnographic and anthropological objects reached Dresden as early as 1881. The “prehistoric objects” that arrived in 1882 would then probably have been sent by Haast at about the same time as his letter of April 1882. Meyer would have replied to this in June 1882 with the last letter quoted, in which he refers, among other things, to his difficulties in exchanging the archaeological objects desired by Haast (as director of a non-archaeological museum) from other museums in return for the consignment. In December 1882, he was finally able to send this type of object, among others, to Christchurch.

45 Meyer probably got the date wrong here. It would be more logical for the letter to have arrived in Christchurch in 1882.

46 MS-Papers-0037-201-07, Alexander Turnbull Library.

Be that as it may, on the basis of the archival records found in New Zealand and Dresden, one must assume that Meyer was only interested vis-à-vis Haast - apart from anthropological objects - in such museum display items as were generally in demand at this time, but not in the crude stone tools of the Moa hunters and consequently probably not in Haast's hypothesis of a very early first settlement of New Zealand by non-Māori.⁴⁷

There is no evidence of any correspondence after 1883. The other correspondence dating from this year was dominated by Haast's wish to obtain models of marine animals (corals and polyps) from the Dresden glassblowing artist Leopold Blaschka, which Meyer was to procure for him. Since Blaschka's work was in demand all over the world and, according to Meyer's letter, he was also a somewhat eccentric man who did not accept every commission, this endeavour turned out to be somewhat difficult and protracted.⁴⁸

The Moa hunter debate that dominated Haast's life in the 1870s is thus not directly reflected in the letters between Haast and Meyer from the early 1880s. The former had already had to accept more and more of his opponents' arguments that the Moa hunters had not lived in as distant a time as he believed. Haast's desire for prehistoric European objects, however, suggests that he was still pursuing the goal of proving the Palaeolithic, Neolithic, Bronze Age and Iron Age periods in New Zealand as well.⁴⁹

The view put forward by Haast in 1871 had already been weakened in 1872 when Alexander McKay (1841-1917) found polished stone tools in a cave containing moa bones and eggshells near Sumner, a suburb of Christchurch, in addition to the rough-hewn stone chips, which could not be divided into two different cultures. Since no polished stone axe blades were found at Rakaia, Haast assumed that the site at Rakaia was the older one. However, the moa found at Sumner were identified as a larger species of bird (*Dinornis robustus*). From this, however, McKay and other specialists concluded that the Sumner site was an older moa hunter's camp. McKay explained the lack of polished stone blades in the younger camp at Rakaia by saying that the hunters there had been more careful with these polished tools than those at Sumner. With the publication of his results in 1874 in the *Transactions and Proceedings*,⁵⁰ he thus publicly opposed Haast, for which the latter never forgave him.⁵¹

In his next publication in 1874, Haast acknowledged that the rough-hewn stone chips and the polished implements could well belong to the same culture, thus conceding a higher level of "civilisation" to the Moa hunters than in 1871. He wrote:

But now, as it were at once, the Moa-hunters disappear from the scene; but not without affording an insight into their daily life, by leaving us some of their polished and unpolished stone implements, a few of their smaller tools, made of bone, a few personal ornaments, as

47 It would be speculative to assume that between the arrival of Haast's 1881 consignment and the receipt of the rough stone tools in 1882, Meyer wrote another letter to Haast, now no longer extant, in which he may have asked for some special stone tools.

48 See letters from Meyer to Haast, 28 January 1882, 22 December 1882, 3 June 1883 (or 1882?), 2 December 1883. MS-Papers-0037-201, Alexander Turnbull Library. The models eventually arrived in Christchurch, and are described and illustrated in Shaw et al. 2017.

49 Thode 2009, p. 232.

50 McKay 1874, pp. 98-105.

51 See Thode 2009, p. 238.

well as fragments of canoes, whares, and of wooden spears, fire-sticks, and other objects too numerous to mention; but by which the fact is established that they had reached already a certain state of civilization, which in many respects seems not to have been inferior to that possessed by Maoris when New Zealand was first visited by Europeans.⁵²

Through the mediation of the president of the Royal Society of London, Sir Joseph Hooker, the New Zealand scientists slowly came closer together. In the years after 1874, numerous finds were made that supported Hector's theory that the moa hunters were the ancestors of today's Māori and that they had only migrated several hundred years ago. Haast then made further concessions to his opponents.⁵³

A complete consensus on who were the first inhabitants of New Zealand and Moa hunters was never really reached. In addition to the two viewpoints mentioned above, a group of scientists held a third hypothesis, namely that a first group of immigrants had come from Melanesia. The inhabitants of the Chatham Islands, 800 km east of New Zealand, the Moriori, were considered by them to be the direct descendants of these early immigrants still living today:⁵⁴

The idea of a distinct race did not hinge entirely on Haast's proposal. This proposal existed alongside the idea of an earlier race often identified with the Moriori of the Chatham Islands. The existence of this race, often perceived as of mixed or Melanesian ethnicity or origin, was supported by Māori traditions that were later expanded upon by the ethnologist S. Percy Smith and his allies.⁵⁵

For the next few decades after Haast's death, the debate about the various waves of immigration dominated the scientific discussion in New Zealand. In the process, people fell back on Haast's theory. Thode writes about this:

The Great Fleet and the theories of the Melanesian Settlement of New Zealand dominated study in the first half of the twentieth century and much of their archaeological foundation came from Haast's identification of two distinct cultures, primarily in the existence of two distinct sets of stone implements.⁵⁶

In 1897, Haast's successor, Frederick Wollaston Hutton (1836-1905), sent a collection of Moriori stone tools from the Chatham Islands to Dresden. These were 2 stone clubs, 13 stone blades of axes or chisels, 1 stone tip of a drill, 3 stone knives and 1 earring made of shell.⁵⁷ The fact that Hutton sent the objects to Dresden can be interpreted as an indication that Haast's thoughts on early non-Māori immigration to New Zealand continued to have an impact beyond his death.

What is the significance of these objects, which were apparently not a high priority acquisition by the Dresden Museum at the time and seem unassuming today at first glance? They are documents

52 Haast 1874, p. 82. Whare is the Māori term for a dwelling, hut or house.

53 See Thode 2009, p. 240; Haast 1879, pp. 150-153.

54 On the question of the origin of the Moriori, a similar, long-running debate developed in New Zealand, which will not be the subject of discussion here. See for example King 1990 and 2000.

55 Thode 2009, p. 240.

56 Thode 2009, p. 241.

57 Unfortunately, due to the lack of letters, it is not possible to understand why Hutton sent these objects to Dresden. Perhaps Meyer had asked for objects by Moriori, who at the time seemed enigmatic.

for a long-lasting hypothesis about New Zealand's settlement history. At the same time, the Moa Hunter debate is a revealing example of theoretical history, namely of a change in the interpretation of archaeological finds based on archaeological comparative material found later. The New Zealand archaeologist Roger Duff (1912-1978) proved in his book *The Moa-hunter period of Maori culture*, first published in 1950, that the stone tools found at the Moa-hunter camps clearly belonged to the stone tool complex of the East Polynesian peoples and that corresponding knives and objects in knock-off technique, but also cross axes found at Rakaia and Shag Point, also occurred on Easter Island, Pitcairn and Hawaii. Meanwhile, archaeologists agree that at least the inhabitants of New Zealand's South Island migrated from East Polynesian islands around the year 1300.⁵⁸ Ultimately, the stone tools of the Moa hunters are interesting documents for the everyday culture of the Māori in the time before European colonisation.

Summary

The *Museum für Völkerkunde Dresden* holds a fine collection of Māori stone tools from New Zealand. These stone tools date to the early phase of Māori settlement in New Zealand and were found in large quantities at resting places where moa were slaughtered, cut up and eaten. The moa (*Dinornithiformes*) are different genera of a flightless giant bird that has been extinct in New Zealand for several centuries.

Julius von Haast, director of the Canterbury Museum in Christchurch, sent the stone tools together with nephrite (*pounamu*) objects and wood carvings to Adolf Bernhard Meyer, the director of the Royal Zoological and Anthropological-Ethnographic Museum Dresden in 1881 and 1882. In exchange, Haast received objects that enriched the collection of the Canterbury Museum.

While this collection of prehistoric stone tools may have seemed unremarkable to the Dresden museum director, as he did not mention them in the published catalogue of the museum's Māori collection - Julius von Haast attached great importance to these artefacts. In the 1870s, they were the basis for an at times highly engaged dispute between New Zealand's leading scientists, which had repercussions as far away as Europe. The issue was a counter-thesis to the now generally accepted idea of New Zealand's settlement history. The starting point of the debate at the time was the question of who eradicated the moa and when.

The German geologist Julius von Haast sought evidence for his thesis that the phases of human development that evolutionist palaeontologists had identified for Europe (the sequence of Palaeolithic, Mesolithic, Neolithic, etc.) could be applied in the same way to the Southern Hemisphere. Accordingly, in Haast's view, the moa hunters with their simple tools had migrated much earlier than the Māori, whom he assigned to a more recent wave of immigrants. His opponents held that the moa hunters were the ancestors of the Māori.

Even though Haast himself later changed his opinion, this dispute continued to have an impact on scientific hypotheses about the settlement history of New Zealand for a long time.

58 See among others Duff 1977 and Buckley 2010, pp. 1-18.

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