

SECTION J—CHAIRMAN'S ADDRESS

The Water Symbol in Maori Graphic and Sculptural Art

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[This address is published in abstract, since its full form required many more illustrations than could be provided in the Proceedings.]

THE water symbol, which appears to have been used first in the graphic art of Pre-dynastic Iran and to have been adopted only a little later in Pre-dynastic Egypt, consists of a line of connected chevrons (which may be called "the ripple") or, in shorthand rendering, of a single chevron, a single chevron with additional stroke, or a pair of linked chevrons. In Bronze Age times this symbol in its various forms spread northward from Iran on to the grasslands and thence eastward to China. It is present in the Geometric pottery of Greece. Throughout the area it frequently appears on jugs and bowls signifying that these are designed to contain water or some other liquid. Everywhere it easily loses its symbolism and becomes purely decorative.

It seems probable that the symbol reached Oceania from China. It is present in northern Melanesia and in Micronesia. In Polynesia it has a sporadic distribution, being present, apparently in a purely decorative usage, in the Marquesas and the Australs. In Maori woodcarving the ripple is strongly represented in the decoration of the *pataka* (storehouse on piles). The distribution of the carved *pataka* was studied in detail, and it was pointed out that at present no evidence exists of its presence in pre-European times south of Otumatua (Taranaki) and the valley of the Whanganui. The ripple pattern (*taratara*) on the *pataka* occurs in the North Island only within the area bounded coastally by the seashore from Miranda to Te Kaha and inland by an ill defined line corresponding roughly with the Arawa territorial boundary. Within this territory the ripple appears to have been confined at first to the whale form on the *maihi* (barge-boards) of the *pataka*. Here it presumably symbolized water, indicating the marine nature of the whale. In the historic Ohinemutu *pataka* called Maru, and in the Te Kaha *pataka* carvings and many others, the ripple appears to have been used decoratively, and without symbolic significance.

The double chevron, many times repeated, occurs on a rock painting recorded by Theo Schoon. The chevron with a stroke added occurs on a stone bowl from Waipu, in the Auckland Museum.

GENERAL SYMPOSIA (SECTION J)

1. *Culture and Personality*.
See Section 8.
2. *Social Science Research in New Zealand*
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The following papers were also read:—

- BIGGS, B. G. Discussion on social aspects of Maori land development
BOOTH, J. M. The community approach to race relations.
DUFF, R. S. Historical review of archaeology in New Zealand.
LAURENSEN, G. I. Supposition and substance: an appraisal by a pakeha minister
METGE, MISS A. J. Urbanization and the pattern of Maori life
PHILLIPS, W. J. European influences on *tapu* and the *tangi*.
SCOBIE, R. A. Material culture in relation to socio-economic organization
TE HAU, M. Some considerations on the nature of Maori-Pakeha relationships

