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THE AXE BITES DEEP:

Settlement and Land Use in the Pohangina County,
1863-1963.

A Thesis Presented in Partial Fulfilment of the
Requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts
in Geography at Massey University.

By

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1968.

Preface

Most of the research for this thesis was based upon two types of source material, primary material and other relevant secondary material. The primary statistical material came from a number of sources; published governmental records available in libraries, especially the Appendices to the Journals of the House of Representatives, the Rural Valuation Rolls made available by the Valuer-General at the Palmerston North Valuation Department, and unpublished local body records made available by the Pohangina County Council.

The published governmental statistical records formed the basis of the material in Appendix I. Most of this material was available from the Palmerston North Public Library and the Massey University Library, but for the period 1896-7 to 1916-17 it was found in the Pohangina County Council's archives. The Valuation Department records covering the Pohangina County from 1919 to 1963 provided data on the basis of individual holdings. The Pohangina County Council's archives provided material for the period since 1894 on ownership and tenure of holdings, the communications system, and a valuable collection of newspaper clippings

relevant to the county from 1893 to c.1908. The Manawatu Catchment Board supplied much of the material on the nature and significance of conservation problems.

Many of the older families of the Pohangina County kindly provided old diaries and photographs, in particular Mr and Mrs D.C. Hogan, Mrs V. Spelman, Mr and Mrs W.M. Duncan, Mr L. Miller and Mr A. Miller who provided valuable material.

To Mr M.J.G. Garland who kindly did the cartography and to others too numerous to mention, I also wish to extend my thanks. Acknowledgement is also made for the valuable assistance from the staff of the Geography Department of Massey University and the typist Mrs. A.Burr.

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Introduction.

In the field of historical geography there has been much controversy on the relative merits and validity of particular methods of approach. Early work within this field was concerned more particularly with the reconstruction of past geographies". Darby (1) cites J.F. Unstead who described historical geography as cutting "horizontal sections through time", and Sir Halford MacKinder who spoke of an historical geography which involved "the historic present". German geographers agreed, for Hettner, writing in 1927, mentioned that "... a historical geography of any region is, in principle, possible for any period of its history, and must be written separately for each period; there is not merely one, but a multitude of historical geographies" (2).

But this view, however, is not shared by all historical geographers. Some, for instance, would limit historical geography to the study of those features of the past which are still evident in present-day landscapes, while others feel that there should be little limitation arising from the time element in historical geography. Thus Preston James stated that "the full perspective of

the time sequence in so far as it is related to geographic patterns and processes is essential if we are to read the story of contemporary differences correctly" (3). Carl Sauer also envisaged such an approach in a study of changing man-land relationships throughout time (4).

Each of these approaches has its merits as well as its limitations. The "cross-sectional method" has been hailed by its exponents as being essentially geographical, an assertion based upon the idea that as the geography of the present slices through time present so should historical geography through time past. In some instances this method has been limited to cross-sections in time, as in Ralph H. Brown's "Mirror for Americans; Likeness of the Eastern Seaboard, 1810" (5). As A. H. Clark added, however, "To stop with ...cross-sectional reconstructions would be to fail in an obvious opportunity, if not duty of interpretation" (6). To overcome the obvious limitations of the single isolated cross-section a series of such cross-sections for pertinent dates can be used, a method employed by Cumberland and Hargreaves in a series of articles on early New Zealand (7). As each cross-section would embody both description and explanation it is possible that repetition would occur; but on the other hand, if each cross-section was limited to strictly contemporaneous

material it would fail to interpret the element of change, and to merely imply such would be both inadequate and possibly misleading.

It is possible, however, to base each succeeding cross-section closely on that preceding it. Darby, in referring to the work of S.D. Dodge who dealt with a Corn-Belt township in this manner, maintained that this method succeeded in the small area involved (8). When this method is employed over a larger area, however, it might involve more specific reference to the "changes" that have taken place since the preceding cross-section. Cumberland's and Hargreaves' accounts of New Zealand between 1780 and 1881 used this method. Each cross-section was both self-explanatory and related while the presentation of past landscapes was not lost in a chronological time sequence.

Carl Sauer's treatment of historical geography differed (9). To him, as to many other geographers, the time sequence was vital to understand contemporary differences which had been brought about through changing geographical processes. Such a concept involves a study of evolution or change and the associated processes operating through time. The emphasis within this field may vary, it may be upon the actual processes involved,

upon the results of these processes, or upon the sociological and technological concepts underlying such processes. Often in this kind of study the material is organised on the basis of vertical themes. The use of this method, however, may detract from the total for the sake of highlighting a particular feature with a series of single-factor studies. C.T. Smith suggested that the method of vertical themes was "only a partial solution" which "extends the field without adequately defining the whole" (10). It is possible, however, to combine vertical and cross-sectional methods, as was done by J.O.M. Broek in "The Santa Clara Valley, California" (11).

A number of university theses may be noted amongst New Zealand studies in this field. Oliver's thesis, on communications in the Manawatu-Kairanga area used vertical themes. Nicholls, writing on the Coromandel Peninsula used the cross-sectional method with implied vertical themes, while Kerr's thesis on the Waikouaiti District employed cross-sections interspersed with vertical narratives (12).

The remaining concept of historical geography is that in which the approach is directed along the lines of discovering the origins of certain relict features in an existing landscape e.g. to study the past only in so far as it has left vestiges in the present landscape.

In such a study it is often difficult to distinguish between the specific relict features and the other phenomena closely associated with them. Furthermore, if they are not separated then the problem arises of recreating a fullscale geography of other past periods.

To avoid this a geographer may confine himself largely to the present and refer back into the past only when necessary for explanation. The use of such a "flash-back method" can lead, however, to an imbalanced view. The problem with this concept, regardless of the method of presentation, is that all too often a past phase, or facet, of occupance has had a greater influence upon the present geography than the relict features persisting to the present would suggest.

There are, then, a number of methods available to the historical geographer, each aiming to present the material analytically and each having its particular advantages and disadvantages. The choice of the method is largely dictated by the nature of the study, the character of the landscape to be dealt with, and the nature and the availability of the material.

The method to be employed in this study is that of a series of related cross-sections, a method recommended by Darby for relatively small areas, especially for showing

change over the total unit (13). The underlying theme will be that of the role of man in the evolution of the present land use, settlement and communications pattern of the Pohangina County. Rather than trace all changes genetically this study will set out to assess the contribution of certain periods chosen with reference to significant changes over the whole county by a series of cross-sections, each taken at fairly significant dates.

The material available has exerted some influence on the choice of method and dates of cross-sections. The Rural Valuation Rolls for the county, for instance, presented a valuable source of information but were available in detail only from 1919 to 1963. Likewise the available information for the county in the pre-European era centred around the period 1859-1864. The final choice of 1863 was based on the fact that not only was most of the material related to this date but it was also the last year of total Maori land tenure(14).

The selection of the years 1906, 1936, and 1963 respectively, was based primarily upon an analysis of government statistical material (15). The year 1906 represents the peak of the pioneering era in terms of population, livestock numbers, and area of cultivated land; 1936 was characteristic^{of} the earlier phase of a

sheep-dominated mixed economy, with a minor peak in population and dairy cattle numbers. After 1936 sheep numbers increased rapidly leading to a growing trend towards an almost exclusively sheep economy. Between 1936 and 1963 the sheep and the cattle numbers increased respectively by 82.9 per cent and 47.1 per cent although population numbers had dropped to the lowest point since the establishment of the county. For both 1906 and 1936 the presence of further fairly comprehensive statistical material was also very important to the choice of the specific date.

References.

1. Darby, 1962, 128.
2. Cited by Darby, 1962, 128.
3. James, 1952, 205.
4. Sauer, 1965, 351 ff.
5. Brown, 1943.
6. Clark, 1959, 222.
7. Cumberland, 1949, 1950, 1954; Cumberland and Hargreaves 1955, 1956; Hargreaves, 1960.
8. Darby, 1962, 133.
9. Sauer, 1965.
10. Smith, 1965, 133.
11. Cited by Darby, 1965, J.O.M. Broek, The Santa Clara Valley, California., 1932.
12. Oliver, 1963; Nicholls, 1959; Kerr, 1962.
13. Darby, 1962, 133.
14. An important source for this date was the survey of the Ahuaturanga Block conducted by J.T. Stewart in 1859-60. There is extant a copy of his survey map which contains details of settlement and vegetation cover as well as other material. There is also a typescript in existence which contains notes made by Stewart on this survey. Information for this period is scarce and this was a valuable source.

15. The statistical material was available from 1896 onwards. The publications used were; Statistics of the Colony of New Zealand, Statistics of the Dominion of New Zealand, The New Zealand Official Yearbooks, Agricultural and Pastoral Statistics.