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ORIGINS OF MAORI ART

**AN ABSTRACT OF
A THESIS
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**by
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This study discusses the nature of primitive art generally and examines the basic characteristics of the relatively simple cultures from which primitive art is produced.

The author presents evidence of the high importance of art and artistic forms in the Maori culture and shows how artistic freedom of expression is limited by the demands of magical and religious symbolism, but is given freer rein when applied to such utilitarian objects as canoe paddles and house boards.

There is evidence cited by Barrow to indicate the merging of two variant cultures in New Zealand. Mr. Dachler proposes the theory that New Zealand was settled entirely from Asia, and discounts completely Thor Heyerdahl's thesis (which he voyaged by raft across the Pacific to prove) that Polynesia, including New Zealand, was settled from Peru.

In this paper the author presents further argument and concludes that two cultural groups originating in Asia did indeed reach New Zealand, the earlier arriving by way of Indonesia and New Guinea with a second group from Polynesia arriving later. Certain characteristics are also found in the art of the Indians of the American Northwest coast which may identify them with the Peruvian-Polynesian group.

An examination of the curvilinear artistic style is

undertaken in the paper, and much of the conclusion concerning the migratory background of the Maori is based on this examination.