

parison with illustrations of various Polynesian tattoo patterns would give an answer as readily and surely as a mere glance at his facial tattooing confirms that it is of Maori origin. It quickly became apparent, however, that in contrast to the wealth of material on other Polynesian art forms, and to the many comparative studies of artifactual and linguistic variations among different island groups, no comprehensive study of Polynesian tattooing had been published and that the records of distinctive tattoo patterns in different areas were of uneven quality. And though descriptions of such patterns, often conflicting, abounded in the journals and reports of explorers, travellers and even missionaries, only in the case of Marquesan tattooing were illustrations to be found comparable in range and quality with the wealth of Maori examples available.³¹

Thanks at this point to the competent assistance of Mr Murray-Oliver one admirable unpublished document came to light: a thesis presented in 1965 for a master's degree at the University of Hawaii, of which the Turnbull Library held a microfilm copy.³² This, as the author claimed, being the first study of Polynesian tattooing as a whole it might hopefully rescue a swimmer in uncharted water by now far out of his depth. The hope exceeded the realisation. The thesis offered insufficient firm evidence of the various Polynesian tattoo styles and patterns to identify Rutherford's; it did however provide enough to eliminate the majority. On various grounds it seemed extremely unlikely that he could have acquired his particular markings in Samoa, Tonga, the Cook Islands or any of the lesser islands or island groups. Hawaii, the Marquesas and Tahiti remained possibilities.

On the basis of an excellent bulletin published by the Bernice P. Bishop Museum Hawaii seemed improbable.³³ Though it gave evidence of many variations in style over the years and in different localities, two general features appeared to characterise Hawaiian tattooing, and neither the descriptions of large geometric patterns, often roughly executed, nor the illustrations of naturalistic representations of familiar objects (European introductions as well as indigenous flora and fauna) corresponded in the slightest degree with the designs on Rutherford's body. As between a Marquesan and a Tahitian origin the problem then intensified. Even, as investigation proceeded, a Maori origin for the whole of Rutherford's tattooing (to which he apparently laid claim) seemed not altogether out of the question. While the vast majority of illustrations of Maori tattooing conform to the normal spiral pattern on face, buttocks and thighs, exceptions have been noted. Two illustrations, one belonging to Cook's first visit³⁴ and the other to d'Urville's in 1840,³⁵ show facial tattooings of predominantly straight vertical lines, overlaid with only slight spiral designs, and as late as 1905 James Cowan sketched two South Island Maoris with parallel horizontal lines across the cheek.³⁶ Possibly Cowan went too far in speculating on the basis of his two cases that the spiral pattern had