

problem with his initial views as to its affinities. William Colenso, although he received the reprint almost a year after its dispatch, sent a long letter in response in which he mentioned his own article in the *Tasmanian Philosophical Journal*, and noted that he had sent all the *Dinornis* bones in his possession.²² W.C. Cotton, who had written to Owen early about Williams's early finds at Waimate, promised additional information but, in the end, had to confess his failure to produce anything new.²³ And Percy Earl, collecting on commission for 'some scientific societies in England, had put together a very fine series of Moa bones but with no trace of a skull' so badly desired.²⁴ Owen took what he could, however varied and fragmentary, always under the impression that the remains were as rare as the initial reports had suggested; and always giving credit to that varied lot of settlers and transients whom he had enlisted in the search.²⁵

The fragmentary materials which arrived sporadically for Owen's examination always left something to be desired: initially, as in Earl's collection, there were no fossils of the skull—only limb bones, pelves and vertebrae from whose metrical differences he attempted an initial segregation of taxa. Nor were there good examples of the bones of the feet to compare with the disputed 'bird tracks' identified by Deane and Hitchcock in the Triassic deposits of the Connecticut Valley in America. The data were still too few to provide any but the scantiest of support for the interesting suggestions as to the Moa's form and affinities. The early 1840s were thus a period of initial description and speculation; and although the interest continued with respect to these giant birds of New Zealand's past and although the relationship between fossil *Dinornis* and living *Apteryx* seemed to support a theory of a patterned change in the organic world from very large forms in the past to their smaller analogues in the present, still the paucity of the material and the lack of good contextual detail for their geological placement resulted in a decreasing interest as the initial excitement waned in the face of other more striking events in the natural history of Europe and, locally, the increasing difficulties which faced the settlers in these early years of settlement.

Owen's first two memoirs and the means by which their supporting data were acquired represent a first stage in the development of an evolving set of 'colonial relationships' in the establishment of a New Zealand science. On the one hand those in the Colony, whatever their role—missionary, settler, administrator or traveller—saw themselves as providing specimens without in any way presuming to make scientific judgments as to their nature. They were contributors to science at its most basic level. Moreover, theirs was a 'national' contribution for it was not science alone