A very high proportion of all the information that survives about Moriori, their language and their lifestyles, was recorded by two remarkable scholars and collectors, Hiruwanu Tapu and Alexander Shand. It has widely been believed that much of Shand’s writings was lost with him in a disastrous fire in 1910. This may well be so, but it now seems that the core of the Moriori material they had collected before 1871 was copied by John White and others, and survives as NZMS-717 in the Auckland Public Library and copied as MSY-1875 in the Turnbull Library in Wellington. This material is of outstanding importance to Moriori today, to linguists reviewing the lost Moriori language, and to anthropologists seeking to understand former Moriori lifestyles. Clarifying how this treasure trove has survived is rather complex but it is well worth spelling out in order to show the authenticity of the subject matter even if some doubts may, perhaps, persist about the purity of the language recorded therein.

Alexander Shand, the son of the rather ineffectual first resident magistrate, arrived on the Chatham Islands in August 1855 aged 15. During the next decade or so, Shand developed such a fine knowledge of the Māori language that he was appointed as the official interpreter at the Land Court sessions held in 1868 even though he was only 28 years old.

Meanwhile Hirawanu Tapu, who had been aged about 12 when enslaved by the Māori invaders in 1835, had become by 1868 the chief spokesman for the remaining Moriori. Because of his personal abilities, and despite rabid opposition from Māori, Tapu had been appointed to the salaried position of tidewaiter (i.e., customs officer) at Owenga from about 1865. Thereafter, until his death in 1900, Tapu was regarded by all as the leader of the remaining Moriori and he was widely courted by visitors to the Chathams as the last repository of Moriori lore (Shand MS. n.d.a).

Tapu and Shand worked closely from 1868 or possibly earlier. Their task was not just to collect Moriori words, but also to work out and refine into writing new word forms that would record adequately the marked difference in Moriori pronunciation, including their distinctive “tch” and their guttural “clipping off” of many terminal sounds.
Shand’s “Missing Moriori Manuscript” Recovered
Shand was generous in lending their resulting joint records to other people including Samuel Deighton, the Resident Magistrate in the Chathams, who curiously the Government had commissioned separately to compose a Moriori dictionary and grammar. Shand also loaned much of his Moriori material to visitors like Tregear and Dendy and to contemporary scholars in New Zealand including John White (Shand MSS. 1870-1879), S. Percy Smith (Shand MS. 1869-1910) and many others (e.g., von Haast [Shand MS. 1890], James Hector [Shand MS. 1889] and White [Shand MS. 1870-79]). However their prime interest, and that of Shand, was to examine traditions of Polynesian origins and migrations (Shand 1904). Consequently, Shand and Tapu recorded little about Moriori land and livelihood during the five or so centuries before Pākehā arrived in 1791 or the Māori arrival in 1835.

For Shand and Tapu the key period of their collecting was during the period from 1868 to 1871. By then Shand was already writing to Smith complaining ruefully that John White had retained his [Shand’s] papers and, still worse, was recasting the Moriori language text into Māori! “That beggar White has got my Moriori papers yet in Auckland. He has detained them to give me what he considers to be the meaning of some passages in their karakia etc.” (to Smith 1871 in Shand MS. 1869-1910, p.34). Deighton had also copied all or part of Shand’s work but subsequently fell out with him. It seems that later Elsdon Best also had access to Shand’s writings though whether from White’s copies or Deighton’s, or both is not clear. Best annotated one passage: “White translated Shand’s Moriori numeration into Maori” (Best MS., p. 13).

Meanwhile Shand had been revising and polishing his records year by year, though with fewer and fewer Moriori to talk to. In 1855 there had been only 205 Moriori men, women and children; in 1862 Seed reported only 160, and by 1868 there were only four Moriori men who had been adults in 1835. When Tapu died in 1900, only 12 Moriori survived who were without any known Māori or Pākehā genes.

S. Percy Smith was the first surveyor on the Chathams in 1868. Smith was the main influence in encouraging Shand to begin collecting. They held each other in high regard and corresponded frequently. In 1892 Percy Smith became the first editor of the *Journal of the Polynesian Society*. For the next six years, to 1898, Smith published many chapters of Shand’s extensive records on the both the migration of the Taranāki Māori to the Chatham Islands and on the history and traditions of the Moriori people of the Chatham Islands (Shand 1892-93, 1894-98). Shand’s depth of knowledge and his scholarship were recognised further internationally when the Moriori articles in the *Journal of the Polynesian Society* were republished posthumously in book form in
1911 (and again in Richards 2001). Smith’s editorial hand was light and is usually evident through editorial footnotes, though after Shand’s death unfortunately Smith added an extra chapter in 1911, which introduced some dubious material from less credible sources purporting to link early Polynesian settlers in New Zealand with Moriori on the Chathams.

This context is important in explaining the authenticity of what remains. Shand’s original text is lost, but NZMS 717 (Shand MS. n.d.b) is headed “Alexander Shand. An Account of the Moriori people of the Chatham Islands, their legends, customs, language, etc.” Below that is written “This is not the original ms, but a copy made by the author and given to John White…. An extra page inserted next states:

Copy of Ms. by A. Shand—being an account of the Moriori people of Chatham Island, giving some of the legends, ritual connected with various rites, and a dissertation on their language…. Some of this matter is embodied in Shand’s articles on the Moriori in the Transactions of the New Zealand Institute. (signed) George Graham 1/7/27.

In the manuscript NZMS 717, there are 71 pages on topics like the origins of the Moriori and their arrival on the Chatham Islands, and numerous karakia, tangi, he kawa and kanga, some with explanatory titles added in Māori or in English. The Moriori equivalents would be karaki, karamithi, toho and kapukapu or kapukap with the final vowels clipped short or silent. There are also ten pages written on related topics, including a few notes on the distinctive variations of the articles in the Moriori language, on the declensions of personal pronouns and on Moriori numerals. For example, the Moriori numerals one to nine are very familiar as tehi, teru, toru, tewha, terima, teono, tewhitu, tewaru and teiwa, but the numeral ten is given variously as meangauru, tearuru and ngauru. These versions for ten also raise the possibility of “two dialects, or more, among them” that Shand referred to, alas only briefly, in a letter to Hocken in 1891 (Shand MS. 1891).

The first page is headed with an illegible phrase, but a clear date of 20 October 1879. That is, before Shand had had Moriori material published by S. P. Smith. Across the margin of this first page, there is an added note by Elsdon Best or possibly S. Percy Smith. This states: “Much of this matter not given by Shand in Maori. J.W. [White] seems to have rendered Shand’s (or Deighton’s) data into Maori, [as the] spelling in Shand [is] often altered by J.W. J.W.’s writing is often not clear. Could not be safely permitted.” This seems to indicate that John White’s rewriting of Shand’s Moriori into his form of Māori was unacceptable for publication. Thus it is White, not Shand, who is being criticised.
It seems very unlikely that, as is stated on the cover, NZMS 717 is in Shand’s handwriting, but rather is that of John White. It now seems that it is Shand’s text re-written, and in parts at least re-expressed by White in language that he regarded as “standard” Māori. This may perhaps debase the value of some of the surviving text as a source of authentic Moriori language, but that does not affect the authenticity of the text’s other Moriori content. The information conveyed will remain more or less the same whether expressed in Moriori, Māori or English. Thus it is no longer correct to say that all of Shand’s work perished with him in the fire in 1910. A great deal remains, though not necessarily in pure Moriori language, but with some parts in the form of Māori used by White.

Moreover some of the Moriori language may be redeemable. Ross Clark, a linguist at The University of Auckland who has published studies of Moriori (Clark 1994, 2000), has had a preliminary look at NZMS-717 and concluded that both languages are in it.

There are bits and pieces [identifiable as] Moriori throughout. Often White gives a Māori equivalent for a word or phrase in a smaller hand [added above the main script]. Parts correspond to texts that Shand published, but there may be discrepancies. I think that a thorough study of this would be bound to add at least a few [new] things to our knowledge of the Moriori language.”

(Clark pers. comm. April 2007)

Unfortunately there is a further element in this saga. In the John White papers, there is a written copy of NZMS-717 which is listed as MS-Papers-0075, folder B27. This text has been cut up into sections (“windowed”, apparently for better continuity and clarity) and rearranged, with numbers “1 to 169” added section by section in pencil, apparently by Elsdon Best. Moreover, a handwritten note on the front page includes the name “Deighton” which has given rise to erroneous attributions to him, and which is certainly incorrect. Folder B27 is valuable too for it conveys how Best saw and chose to re-order and annotate NZMS 717.

What is now clear beyond all doubt is that, taken together, Shand’s text of 1871 (NZMS-717) in the Auckland Public Library, reworked by John White, and the “windowed version” in MS-Papers-0075 in the Alexander Turnbull Library reordered and annotated by Elsdon Best, are valuable sources ripe for further research in support of the continuing Moriori renaissance.
REFERENCES


——MS. 1870-79. Letters to John White…, Auckland Public Library. (NZA.47.51 NZ 091.5 sp). Enclosures of Moriori language material for publication not found with letters.


——MS. 1891. [among] Four Letters to Dr Hocken, mainly on Illness of Tapu Irawana, etc. 1885-1891. Hocken Library, Dunedin.

