

# **The Maori Navigated Wide Seas to Reach New Zealand**

**Within the lines joining Hawaii, New Zealand, and Easter Island are grouped all the major Pacific Islands whose peoples are of Polynesian stock and culture—kinsmen of our own Maori.**

THE first coming of native peoples to the land later to be known as New Zealand is a matter for conjecture, not definite statement. Though we cannot say when they came nor whence, we know that there were native settlers in New Zealand long before the well-remembered ancestors of present-day Maori arrived in their fleet of canoes roughly 600 years ago.

These ancestors were people of Polynesian blood. Polynesian is a word taken from the Greek. It means 'many islands,' and it is the name scientists give to the peoples who live on all those Pacific islands which lie within the bounds of an imaginary triangle whose sides join Hawaii in the north, New Zealand in the south, and Easter Island in the east. From one of these islands the Polynesian sea rover, Kupe, set sail about 950 A.D. He discovered New Zealand and returned to his homeland, reporting that he had seen there definite signs of human habitation. He gave his people the sailing directions for reaching the new country far to the south.

Much later, perhaps about 1150 A.D., a chief named Toi set out from Tahiti to search for his grandson who had been blown out to sea. Toi sailed to Rarotonga. From there he followed Kupe's instructions to keep a little to the right of the setting sun by day and to steer by Venus at night. Toi finally landed at Whakatane. Later he was joined by his grandson who in turn had set out to search for the searcher. Toi and his people intermarried with the native people already in New Zealand. They lived on forest products and fern roots. They evidently kept in close touch with their kin in Tahiti, for when the great fleet of Polynesian canoes set out for New Zealand about 1350 A.D., the people on board knew exactly what their destination was.

This exodus from Tahiti was a well-planned migration by fearless, sea-loving people. Tahiti at this time was over-populated. Tribes were fighting each other for what food was available. To get away from civil war and settle peacefully in a southern land must have seemed an ideal solution to a difficult situation. Large canoes were heavily laden with people and food—food for the voyage, cultivable plants, and seeds for the new land. Each canoe sailed under a captain. He was helped by a priest or navigator who kept the canoe to her course. Eleven days from Tahiti, nine days from Rarotonga, should have brought the canoes to New Zealand. Probably many of the canoes that set sail were lost for ever on the wide Pacific. But many of the canoes made safe landfalls in the land called *Ao-tea-roa*, Long White Cloud, *Arawa*, *Aotea*, *Mataatua*, *Tainui*, *Tokomaru*, are the famous names of some of these canoes. From members of the crews of these canoes the Maori to-day is proud to trace his descent.

**A harbour in Rarotonga, the legendary point of departure of canoes in the great migration to New Zealand.**

**An artist's version of the arrival of the Maori in**

**New Zealand. Note the large double canoes and the typically Polynesian lateen sail of woven mat. This oil painting by K. Watkins hangs in the Auckland Art Gallery.**

## **The Maori People are Members of the Polynesian Race**

**The 'Head of a New Zealander' as recorded by the artist of Captain Cook's first expedition. Ear pendants, neck ornament, and large comb together with knotted hair complete the decoration of the tattooed face.**

**In 'A Narrative of a Nine Months' residence in New Zealand, in 1827,' Augustus Earle shows this Maori method of tattooing.**

THE Maori people all belong to the Polynesian race. They are racial cousins to the native peoples who live on the islands within the Polynesian triangle. All these people, including the Maori, have similar customs and social life. They have similar beliefs about this world and the next. They all speak different dialects of the same Polynesian language.

The typical Maori-Polynesian has light brown skin which becomes quite dark when it is burnt by the sun. His hair is black and wavy but not frizzy or kinky as is the case with some dark peoples. His lips are of average thickness. Usually his head is long in shape with a narrow nose, but a broad-headed, broad-nosed physical type is also found in some districts. He is tall of stature, averaging about 5 feet 8 inches in height. Of all the other races in the world, the Maori most closely resembles in physical type the Caucasian race to which the white man belongs.

What made the old-time Maori look so strange to the white man was the fact that every distinguished Maori man and woman was tattooed. This operation was performed on the adolescent boy or girl by an expert who was paid for his services with valuable gifts. First he outlined the tattooing pattern with charcoal on the skin. Then he dipped his pointed bone tool into a colouring dye, placed it on the traced pattern, and struck the tool with a short piece of wood. The colouring dye was made from the soot obtained from resinous woods or kauri gum.

No Maori really considered himself to be a man unless he was tattooed on the face. Sometimes he was also marked on the thighs and buttocks with spiral patterns. An elaborate tattooing job might take years before it was satisfactorily finished. Women were generally tattooed only on the lips and chin. The commonest pattern for them was a curling line on each side of the chin with three or four fine lines drawn vertically downwards from each corner of the mouth. No Maori woman without this indelible facial ornament was considered to be worth marrying. If she were a girl of high rank, then it was sometimes thought necessary to add prestige to the tattooing operation on her face by sacrificing a slave at the same time.

**The edition of Crozet's Voyage translated by H. Ling Roth describes this sketch as 'A Maori, with tattooed buttock and thighs.' The picture gives a good idea of the way the spiral design is fitted to the form of the body.**

**Earle calls this Maori 'Aranghie, the tattooer of New Zealand.' The Maori tattooers were honoured and respected experts who combined the skill of the craftsman with the trained eye of the artist.**

**Erewera Maihi Patuone, brother to Tamati Waka Nene, remembered Captain Cook's visit to New Zealand in 1769. A chief of Hokianga, he died in Auckland in 1872, reputedly aged 108 years.**

**Men and Women Dressed Alike and Wove their Garments from Flax**

**This sketch of a Maori woman's tattooing is taken from H. G. Robley's 'Moko' (1896). Compare this characteristic tattooing of a Maori woman's lips with the more elaborate tattooing of the Maori man's face and body.**

THE Maori made their clothes out of flax. When they came to New Zealand they brought with them the knowledge of making cloth from the bark of the paper mulberry tree. The climate of their new home, however, was too cold for the mulberry tree to grow well, so they turned to dressed flax as a substitute. This they wove into garments on a sort of improvised loom.

Both the Maori man and woman wore much the same sort of clothes. Fashion therefore was of no account with them. Round his waist the Maori wore a kilt secured by a belt. Over his shoulders he threw a rectangular-shaped cape. Women and girls sometimes added a kind of apron round their waist. A chaplet or headband kept in place feathers for dress occasions. Sandals covered the feet only as a protection against the cold or when walking over rough stony places. Children, more favoured, did without any clothing until they were about ten years old.

Men wore their hair long. It was tied into a knot on the top of the head and adorned with feathers or with a comb of bone or wood. Women cut their hair short. Both sexes wore neck or ear pendants of greenstone, human or shark's teeth, and bunches of feathers. Flat noses were considered handsome. A fond mother often pressed her baby's nose flat, thus doing what she could to improve its appearance.

**A scraper-board drawing of a Maori woman at Ruatahuna (Urewera Country) weaving a flax mat. The drawing was copied from a photograph in Augustus Hamilton's 'Maori Art' (1901). The weaving is stretched between two upright sticks and the woman works from left to right engaging the horizontal wefts with the vertical warps solely by use of the fingers. Maori weaving is not a true textile weaving and hence does not use any form of loom.**

**William Hodges, artist of Captain Cook's second voyage, drew this flax plant in 1777. Flax (*Phormium tenax*) was a valuable plant to Maori men and women, being used in a variety of ways for clothing and ropes.**

**This portrait of 'Tetoro, Chief of New Zealand' was drawn from life by R. Read in 1820, and was used by Captain R. A. Cruise in 'Journal of a Ten Months' Residence in New Zealand.' Dr. T. M. Hocken, the noted authority on New Zealand history, states that 'Tetoro' was**

**'Titore' and that Captain Cruise was in military charge of H.M.S. 'Dromedary' whilst procuring kauri spars. It has been suggested that Cruise's Journal was written by Lieut. McCrae, a young officer of the 'Dromedary.' Titore is wearing a typical Maori cloak.**

**In 'The New Zealanders Illustrated' G. F. Angas gave the the English-speaking world much interesting information about the Maori. Published in 1847, his book contained numerous colour plates from his own sketches. The collection of 'Decorations,' for instance, shows ear ornaments and ear pendants, neck ornaments (hei tiki), the tail feather and head of the prized huia bird, wooden combs, tattooing instruments, and examples of designs on the bottom borders of flax garments. The little boy ornaments the pictures only.**

**Tribes Trace their Origin to the Canoes of the Great Migration**

**A sketch of the Paepaeaotea, a rocky island near White Island in the Bay of Plenty, which R. Mair, the Maori scholar, described as 'The threshold of Aotearoa—a joyful sight to the**

**weary voyagers' after their migration. It is stated in Maori traditions that the coastline behind this rock was one of the first landfalls of the migrating canoes.**

THE crew of each canoe that arrived in New Zealand with the great fleet of 1350 A.D. settled in a different part of the country. Thus the people of the *Aotea* canoe and their descendants formed the tribes of the west coast area. The *Mataatua* canoe made its landfall at Whakatane, and from this canoe descend many of the tribes of the Whakatane and Bay of Plenty districts. From the *Arawa* canoe, which beached at Maketu, come the people of the Hot Lakes and Taupo region. Tribes of the King Country and the Waikato call the *Tainui* canoe their own. Taranaki tribes claim descent from the *Tokomaru* and *Kurahaupo* canoes. From *Takitimu* and *Horouta* canoes come the people of the East Coast.

These and other voyagers claimed their tribal areas by right of naming and settlement. They brought with them from their homeland the *kumara*, the taro, the yam. The native Polynesian dog came with them as an invited guest on their canoes, but the rat probably came by mistake as a stowaway.

**G. F. Angas drew Maketu House, Otawhao Pa (East Coast, North Island), and described it as being 'constructed entirely of wood, and thatched with raupo . . . . the carving bestowed upon the figures that so profusely adorn this "war temple" exhibits a wonderful degree of labour and skill.' This is an interesting drawing of an old-time Maori meeting house—not a 'war temple' as Angas states.**

From the very nature of its founding, each tribe was composed of people more or less closely related to one another by blood. As the tribes increased in numbers, one group of relatives might break away to form a sub-tribe. But all the members of the largest tribal grouping would proudly trace their ancestry back to the founder of the tribe after whom the tribe was named.

Each tribe kept closely to the area of land which it claimed as its own and off which it made its living by cultivation, hunting and fishing. The people were settled in small villages, each near its own cultivations. In times of warfare the people retired to their fortified village or *pa* where they lived until danger was over.

The houses making up the village were all rectangular in shape. There was a rough cookhouse for each family. The sleeping house used by several families was built for warmth. It was anything up to thirty feet long, with low walls banked with earth, a low door, a small window. There was no chimney. A small fire was kept burning during cold weather and the smoke escaped where it could. In larger houses logs of wood were laid on the floor to mark off resting places and to keep the bedding fern from drifting about the floor.

**A map showing the approximate landing places of the canoes of the great migration**

**and the boundaries of the land areas originally settled by members of the crews. The map form which this sketch is taken hangs in the Auckland museum.**

The pride of the village was a large carved dwelling house occupied by the chief or reserved for honoured guests. It was sometimes seventy feet long, built with mighty carved timbers. The walls were lined inside with ornamental reed work and the rafters painted with intricate designs in red and white. These meeting houses of important and powerful tribes were works of great art.

Storehouses, both large and small, were built on raised foundations. They were intricately carved on the outside and painted with red ochre. As with the meeting house, the work in decorating the storehouse was meant to indicate the wealth and prestige of the tribe.

**Dumont d'Urville's artist made this pleasing representation of a typical inlet on the East Coast of the North Island. Prominent in the picture are the Maori canoes, the trees growing to the water's edge, and the sea-worn rocks.**

**The Tribal Chief was Powerful But Public Opinion Ruled**

**Tawhaio, a Maori chief. G. Lindauer painted this picture, which is in the possession of the Alexander Museum at Wanganui. It gives a good idea of the dignity of the Maori chief. Note the huia feathers in his hair, his greenstone ear pendant, and his whalebone club.**

**Earle shows a chief making a war speech to**

**his warriors. Typical of Maori oratory is the way the speaker moves to and fro, using a weapon or staff to emphasise the main points of his argument.**

IN theory, Maori society was divided into three classes. There was a group of chiefs and other gentlemen of good birth who were the heads of the tribal group. Then there was a class of commoners. The lowest class was made up of slaves. There were three classes in theory. But in fact, just because all the people of the tribe were related by blood to each other, it was sometimes difficult to know where the gentleman class left off and the commoner class began. But there are words for each of these three classes in the Maori language, so we must suppose them to have existed as a social fiction if in no other way.

The chief was the first-born of a family of rank. Maori society laid great stress on primogeniture in the inheritance of power and position. A firstborn son was only passed over if he had shown himself definitely unworthy to lead his tribe in peace or war.

The basis of Maori society, as of every other society we know, was the family group. This consisted of a man and his wife and his children, married or unmarried. It was a larger family group than we are accustomed to, but it was a strongly unified group of blood relatives. Some of its strength came from the fact that its members addressed each other with kinship terms which stressed this unity. Thus in such a group one called the many men of his father's generation, 'father,' though he knew quite well who was his father. Similarly the men called all the children by the term for son or daughter, as the case might be. This again meant that everyone looked upon everyone else in the tribe as somehow or other related to him. And he would call upon these other people for help in the tasks of peace as well as in the duties of wartime—and help was never denied him.

What made Maori society a going concern was really the power of public opinion, the *mana* and influence of the chiefs and the working of certain beliefs and customs such as *tapu* and *murū*. *Tapu* was a sort of prohibition which told the Maori what he could and what he could not do. It was supported by supernatural power so that a person who broke a *tapu* was punished by sickness or death or else by the loss of the protection of the gods. Thus it was necessary to call in a priest to deal with these matters because he was the person in the tribe with the necessary powers to control supernatural forces.

*Muru*, on the other hand, was a sort of licensed plundering of other people's property. It was allowed if one of the group had incapacitated himself by accident, for instance, or broken the customs of marriage. In this sense, the individual was regarded only as a part of the group, and if his conduct had in any way upset the group, then it was lawful for the group to punish him by plundering his property. A Maori who knew that his faults or his evil-doings would be punished by *murū*, or by the supernaturals, or by the dislike and ridicule of his friends, was slow to do wrong. Although the Maori had no courts of law nor any policemen, he was a very social and custom-abiding person.

**The interior of a pa, on the Wanganui River, from W. Tyrone Power's 'Sketches in New Zealand with Pen and Pencil' (1849). This picture shows the stockade, sleeping and food houses—and the inevitable pigs.**

**'The Inside of a Hippiah' was drawn by J. Webber on Cook's third voyage. It is**



**interesting as the first picture of its kind, showing an inside view of what a Maori fortified village ('hippah' as Cook spelt the word 'pa') looked like in Cook's day.**

## **The Maori Journeys from Birth to Death**

**'Rotorua from Ohinemutu, Mokoia Island' is an oil painting in the Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington. The artist is unknown. The scene reminds us that the Maori often lived in places of great natural beauty.**

As he passed through this world from his birth to his death, the ordinary Maori commoner was little troubled by ceremonial observances. With the chiefly boy or girl, however, the case was very different. Ceremonial began with his birth. *Tapu* prohibitions surrounded the confined mother. She was segregated from the ordinary life of the village and lived in a temporary hut attended by her female relatives. A priestly expert might be called in to assist her with his incantations. And when a child of high rank was born a big celebration was held. All the members of the sub-tribe came together bringing gifts of food. They assembled at the village meeting ground and sang chants of

**The Rev. Richard Taylor, a missionary, published this sketch of 'The Geysers of Orakokorako' in 'Te Ika a Maui' (1855). Hot springs played an important part in the life of Maori tribes in the centre of the North Island.**

greeting, welcoming the child to the world of light. A boy child of rank was baptised ceremonially by the priests. He was taken to the nearest stream and sprinkled with water, while his name was pronounced and he was dedicated to *Tu*, the Maori god of war.

Maori childhood was a happy-go-lucky time. It was a time for fun and play. But many of the youngsters' games were imitative of the adult activities. Thus the Maori child learned the customs and skills of his tribe in a natural, effortless way. And his grandfather, resting comfortably in the sun, would amuse the child with tales of tribal history and recite once again the genealogy of famous names that traced the tribe back to the beginning of the world. Then for the adolescent boy of chiefly rank there was the Maori university. He attended this school of learning for winter after winter until he had well committed to memory the lore of the living and the lore of the gods.

When the time for marriage arrived a mate was found within the tribe. Elders made a practice of arranging the whole affair, taking care, however, that bride and groom were not too closely related. Sometimes this family arrangement was celebrated by a feast, but there was rarely any ceremony of marriage as we know it. Only

chiefs had more than one wife. And this was more for show than anything else. It proved to the tribe that the chief was really a great chief if he was wealthy enough to provide for two or more wives.

Death came for the Maori as it comes for every mortal. Although the Maori had no fear of the afterworld, he was fearful of sickness and of death itself. The sick person was highly *tapu*. He was removed from his house and placed in a temporary house of death. His relatives and friends gathered to listen to his last words. Then when death closed the sick one's eyes, they wailed and chanted farewells from the land of the living. The corpse lay in state for days. It was dressed and adorned in fine clothes, surrounded by precious gifts and the sorrowing of fellow-tribesmen.

The body was buried only to be exhumed after some years. The bones were cleaned and taken to the village. There was feast-making and speech-making. With a final farewell, the bones were hidden again in hollow tree or swamp or sand dune. One more life had run its appointed course.

**Angas's version of the Maori swing game, in the Taupo region. A player let go his rope as he swung over the water and fell splashing into the pool below.**

**This picture by Angas shows mourners weeping and wailing over a dead chief. The corpse lies in state outside the house and relatives mourn for the chief's departed spirit.**

**Men and Women Worked Hard for Supplies of Food**

**In 1842 Charles Heaphy sketched this provision house at Otumatua Pa, Cape Egmont. The house is on piles to keep out rats, and because the Maori appreciated the value of foods, it is heavily ornamented with carving. Piles of kumara baskets are seen to the right. A notched pole gives access to the stored foods.**

THE old-time Maori had to work hard for the food that he ate. The climate of his New Zealand home was not so favourable as that of the sunny tropics that he left behind him. In the northern part of the North Island he could grow the yam, though with some difficulty. Elsewhere his staple vegetable food was the sweet potato.

And in high and cold districts where the sweet potato would not grow, he had to live on the root of the bracken fern. Planting time for the sweet potato was governed by the stars and phases of the moon. The ground was worked over with a simple digging-stick.

Before the general planting, the priests planted a few seed tubers with appropriate ceremonial and incantation. This was to secure the favour of the gods and to make sure that a good crop would result.

Each family owned its own plantation and provided the seed tubers. But all the members of the village group worked together co-operatively —chiefs and commoners, men and women—at cultivating, planting and harvesting. Thus the work was lightened and all enjoyed themselves in the picnic fun of a working bee.

When the star Vega arose in the early morning, the sweet potatoes were harvested and carried in baskets to the semi-underground storage houses or pits. There they were carefully picked over and stored until needed.

**De Sainson, an artist who illustrated Dumont d'Urville's 'Voyage Pittoresque Autour du Monde' (1839 shows a Maori party hoeing up potatoes. Food is also being temporarily stored on a platform at the left of the picture.**

**Comapre Heaphy's version of storehouse with this one from Angas, described as a 'Storehouse for food, belonging to the chief Te Heuheu, at Taupo.' As before, carvings decorate this house. Two empty gourds used for storing birds are seen to the right, and at the left a Maori woman is beating fern root.**

Bracken root was dug in spring or early summer and stacked in the shade to dry. Then it was sorted and stored away. By pounding the roots with a beater, a thick dough was obtained which was considered a nourishing and sustaining food.

Taro was grown in favoured districts. The taproot of the cabbage tree, the heart of the nikau palm, the roots and yellow pollen of the bulrush, and various edible berries were all used as additional vegetable foods.

The Maori cooked his food out-of-doors or in a rough cook-house away from his dwelling house. Cooked food was considered particularly contaminating as far as *tapu* and *mana* were concerned, and thus it was removed from *tapu* persons and places. Fire was made by rubbing two sticks together. An excavated pit was filled with wood, and when this had been lighted and had burnt down, the food was placed in the pit and covered with flax mats and earth. Some hours later it was removed from the oven perfectly cooked.

For his plate the Maori used a flat basket of plaited flax. For his knife he used a flake of obsidian. To hold his food he used vessels of wood, plaited baskets, vessels of bark, or gourds. When he held a great feast, he built huge pyramidal wooden scaffoldings which he loaded high with food of all sorts. And the tribe gathered for fun and feasting and dancing. Food and feasting were central interests for the Maori, as for all people.

**In 'The Story of New Zealand,' Dr. A. S. Thomson, a Surgeon-Major, shows a 'Stage for**

**Hakari or Feast given to Governor Grey in 1849 at the Bay of Islands to celebrate the peace between the two races.' Food was piled high on the stage platforms and the Maori visitors would comment on the generosity of their hosts as they gazed at the abundant supply.**

## **The Maori through European Eyes**

**Maori in a canoe, as they appeared to Tasman in 1642. The Maori look like Dutchmen and their canoes like Dutch boats! This is one of the earliest drawings ever made of Maori by Europeans.**

**J. L. Nicholas, who accompanied Samuel Marsden on one of his journeys to New Zealand, used this picture of 'A Chief of New Zealand' in his 'Narrative of a Voyage to New Zealand' (1817).**

**W. Hodges, Captain Cook's artist on his second voyage, shows a 'Family in Dusky Bay'.**

**John Savage, surgeon of a ship which called at the Bay of Islands for spars in 1805, drew 'Tiarrah, a Chief of the Bay of Islands.'**

**A Maori woman. The plate is taken from a costume book of 1796, 'Moeurs, Loix et Costumes des Sauvages de la Nouvelle Zélande et de la Baye Hudson' by M. J. Grasset Sait-Saveur. Probably the artist was a little confused between the Indian and the Maori when he drew this picture.**

**A pencil sketch of Te Rauparaha by Charles Heaphy in the forties, a much better representation of a typical Maori head than the other two on this page.**

**A Maori warrior—also from the French costume book of 1796. It is an interesting study to compare such versions of the appearance of the Maori with those of later artists.**

**A poi dance, painted by Edward Markham in 1834. Trade blankets instead of native cloaks had evidently come into use by this date.**

**A striking engraving of the head of 'Natai,' a Bream Bay chief, from the 'Atlas' (1833) of the 'Astrolabe' expedition.**

**Interior of a pa, near Wanganui, 1840, from a**

**lithograph of J. A. Gilfillan's picture. The pa is generally believed to be Putiki. Note again the stockade and houses. This picture is full of very interesting details.**

## **The Hunstman Triumphed by Skill and the Help of the God**

LARGE game was absent from the old-time New Zealand forest. Even the pig was a late-comer to these shores, being introduced by Captain Cook. The great *moa* bird, long extinct, was probably hunted by the pre-Maori inhabitants of New Zealand, for its remains have been found close to ancient ovens. It was still found in the North Island when the first Polynesian settlers arrived. Traditions from the East Coast preserve a clear account of the first meeting of the early Maori with a few surviving birds. Apparently, however, the *moa* survived in the South Island long after it had disappeared further north.

The absence of large game made the birds and rats of the forest desirable additions to the Maori diet. The forests were under the protection of the great god *Tane*. Thus different forms of *tapu* had to be observed in order to retain the good-will of this god when hunting in the forest. Cooked food, for example, was not taken to the forest, nor was food ever cooked in the forest. If bird hunters left feathers scattered about the forest, this was unlucky, because all the birds would probably fly away. First-fruit offerings were common. The first birds and the first fish caught and the first crops were all offered to the gods. Simple shrines were set up in the forest, and on these offerings of grass and small branches were placed to placate the forest spirits.

## **Kiwi and Moa, the famous wingless birds of New Zealand, as drawn by Dr. F. von Hochstetter in 1859.**

## **The Pink Terraces, from 'New Zealand Graphic and Descriptive' by C. D. Barraud (1877). This wonder of the Thermal Regions, destroyed in the Tarawera eruption of 1886, was well known to the old-time Maori.**

With all his efforts to secure spiritual help, the Maori did not neglect to acquire all the knowledge he could of the habits of the birds he hunted. He used snares and running nooses to catch pigeons. He used a decoy bird and a slip-noose to catch the parrakeet. He used a lure for the *kiwi* and sometimes also hunted this bird with the aid of his native dog. The rat he trapped with a spring trap or else caught in a pit—and the rat he considered a great delicacy.

Most of the birds and rats that rewarded his hunting he preserved in large gourds. The carcasses were boned and cooked. Then they were packed into the gourds and covered with their own 'melted fat. Thus preserved, they constituted a highly-prized food supply and were often taken as valued gifts when an inland tribe visited friends on the sea-coast.

From the forest also came many of the berries that were eaten, and many of the berries also from which were extracted the vegetable oils used to soften and make attractive the hair and skin.

The bird spears and snaring perches used by the Maori were often elaborately carved. The carving did not increase their usefulness in any way. But this gives us a hint as to the motives of the Maori craftsman. He was interested in beautiful implements and tools just for the sake of their beauty. And he would labour long and lovingly at his carving designs as, with his slow, stone tools, he made more beautiful the things that he used in everyday life. The old-time Maori was not lazy and shiftless. He liked to carve his snaring perch or his fighting spear, and carve them he did with beautiful intricate designs that had no other purpose than to appeal to his aesthetic sense and his pride.

**De Sainson, artist on one of Dumont d'Urville's expeditions, sketched these Maori articles (1833): Dish and pounder (top), weapons (extreme right and left), fish-hooks (top right and left), greenstone ornament (centre), ear-rings (bottom, centre, right, and left).**

**This view of an arched rock is described in Hawkesworth's account of Captain Cook's first voyage. The Maori is carrying a long bird-spear.**

## **Canoes Embodied Traditional Art and Were Finely Carved**

WHEN the ancestors of the Maori arrived in New Zealand their vessels were probably large outrigger canoes of the type common, even to-day, in the Polynesian islands of the Pacific. But the Maori found in his new home large timber from which a big canoe could be cut. With the addition of a top-strake the canoe would be fit for sea-faring. Both the double canoe and the outrigger canoe gradually fell into disuse. Cook saw both types of canoe during his visits to New Zealand. Thereafter, however, the single wide-beam canoe displaced the other forms of Polynesian canoe as far as the Maori were concerned.

The Maori were expert canoe builders. A suitable tree was felled by partial burning and chipping with the stone adze. Along a path made from forest to sea, the tree was hauled on skids by the combined man-power of the tribe. By the sea the real work of making a canoe began. The inside was adzed out. Elaborately carved stern-piece and bow-piece were fashioned, finished, and fitted to the hull of the canoe. Bailer and masts, sails and paddles were wrought according to traditional design. Finally the canoe was launched with befitting priestly ceremonial.

Large ornamented war canoes were from 60 to 100 feet long with a beam of perhaps seven feet. Plainer, rougher canoes were used for fishing and river work. They were rarely carved or decorated.

**Mount Egmont and a Maori war canoe, from**

**Angas's 'The New Zealanders Illustrated' (1847). This gives a good picture of a Maori canoe at sea with lateen sail and carved prow and stern pieces.**

**H. G. Robley's 'Moko' (1896 includes these sketches of a Maori and the prow of a war canoe. The author comments on the fine carving of the prow. The spiral of the Maori's tattoo should be compared with the design of the carving.**

**A Maori war canoe, drawn by Captain Cook's artist. This shows again the beautiful carvings with which the Maori ornaments his canoes. Leaders standing in the canoe chant the rhythms for the paddlers to follow.**

**A fortified village. This picture is also from the account of Cook's first voyage. Note the inaccessible site of the pa, the canoes drawn up on the beach to the right, and compare the fort with the one [drawn on the left of page 24](#).**

**The Maori Was an Expert Fisherman With Net or Hook**

**Entitled 'Amuri, New Zealand, sketched 12th**



**December, 1850,' the original of this water-colour painting is in the Canterbury Museum. The carving of stern-post and prow of the canoe shows to the expert that it was done with steel European tools by Maori craftsmen in the Kaikoura district.**

**Canoes on the Wanganui River, from a sketch by J. A. Gilfillan. Note the difference in ornament between the two canoes, one a simple river dugout for short trips, the other a more elaborate canoe for longer journeys.**

THE Maori used his workaday canoe frequently. If his tribe lived inland, then there were eels and small fish to be taken from the river. If his was a coastal people, then he used his canoe for deep-sea fishing and for seine netting. Each tribal group had its own named fishing grounds whereon it knew each deep and shallow and the habits of all the fish that could be caught.

Many types of net were used. All of them— whether seine net or frame net, hand net or scoop net—were made from dressed flax fibre. The making of the great seine nets—anything from 500 feet to 1,000 or more yards long—was both a serious industry and a *tapu* undertaking. No persons other than the net makers were allowed to be present. Canoes appearing close to shore where the netters were at work were immediately seized. One of the first lot of fish caught in the new net was taken by a priestly expert to the shrine of the village and there offered to the gods. The first catch of fish was cooked in three ovens— one oven for the important men, one oven for the influential women, and the third oven for the commoners. The commoners ate only after food from the first two ovens had been tasted.

Hooks of all sizes were used for line fishing. The hooks were made of bone, wood, stone, shell, and, rarely, of greenstone. They were of various shapes according to the fish it was desired to catch. Fish line cordage was made from flax fibre. It was strong and durable.

In the catching of fresh-water fish, the Maori was also a great expert. Eels were his favourite river food. He caught them in eel-pots set at eel-weirs that zigzagged across suitable rivers. Lampreys, whitebait, and shellfish also provided a welcome change of diet according to season and fisherman's luck.

**This composite picture is taken from 'The New Zealanders Illustrated' (1847) by G. F. Angas:**

- 1 • 'Mode of fishing with nets on Lake Taupo.'
- 2 • 'A fishing weir, or eel trap, on the river Mokau.'
- 3 • 'A wooden fish-hook.'
- 4 • 'Fish-hook generally in use.'
- 5 • 'Eel trap, formed of twigs.'
- 6 • 'A wooden digging stick.'
- 7 • 'A pounder for beating flax.'
- 8 • 'Wooden flute.'
- 9 • 'Bark bucket.'

- 10 • 'Flax basket.'
- 11 • 'Ancient wooden bowl for kumaras.'
- 12 • 'Flax sandals.'
- 13 • 'Flax Sandals.'
- 14 • 'An aged slave woman.'

## The Ancient Maori Fought According to Rules of Honour

THE MAORI was an enthusiastic and skilful warrior. Indeed for him fighting was the chief pastime, just as, perhaps, football is for us.

The causes of his wars were many: quarrels over women, disputes over land boundaries, a desire to revenge some insult, slight, curse, murder, or the like were each one of them sufficient to persuade chiefs and elders that the time had come to blow the war trumpet and call together the man-power of the tribe.

The war party assembled willingly. The warriors were naked except for their waist girdles, but principal warriors might also make a show of their precious dog-skin cloaks. Each sub-tribal chief cut a lock from the crown of his head and tossed it-in the direction of the village shrine. The warriors were rendered *tapu* by being baptised in a near-by stream. Then they whipped up their courage and enthusiasm by dancing the defiant *haka* while priests secured supernatural blessings by uttering prayers and incantations.

## A scraper-board drawing of a Maori fort in 1839, showing its isolated and impregnable defensive position.

In the centre of this picture G. F. Angas shows warriors preparing for a fight. Grouped around are various weapons, such as (top and below) tomahawks (post-European), (left) fighting staffs (*taiaha*), and (below) greenstone mere and whalebone clubs. The small picture (bottom centre) shows warriors beating a wooden gong, while a war trumpet is shown at the base of the group.

A war party usually consisted of about 140 men. Its line of march was strewn with omens, and it was exceptionally good luck if man, woman, or child happened to cross the path of the marching warriors. Such a luckless individual was immediately slain and the fighters were delighted that the gods had been good to them.

Meanwhile the people to be attacked were probably aware that fighting was afoot. They retired to their fortified village bringing in with them supplies to withstand a siege, if necessary. Sentries were posted and all were alert for the arrival of the enemy.

The favoured time for the attack was just before dawn. When the *pa* was taken by assault or when one side fled from the field of battle, the prisoners were either slain outright or reserved for slaves. The flesh of warriors

was *tapu* for women, so men only could eat of the flesh of those killed. The skin and bones of distinguished chiefs might be preserved for covering hoops or for fish-hooks or for spear-barbs—and no greater insult could be offered to any man or his relatives than that his flesh should stick to the teeth of his conquerors and his bones be turned to useful but mundane purposes.

## **Dr A. S. Thomson gives this vivid impression of 'The War Dance' in 'The Story of New Zealand' (1859). The introduction of the musket by Europeans revolutionised Maori methods of warfare.**

Maori fighting in olden days, before the use of the white man's gun turned sport to slaughter, was governed by a rigid code of gentlemen's rules. Personal bravery and disregard of death were emphasized. How to die correctly was just as important to know as how to live correctly. And many a tale is told of a conquered warrior handing to his foemen a precious greenstone weapon with which his skull, a moment later, would be cleft.

The agile Maori warrior preferred a light, slender weapon with which to guard or strike. He was essentially a hand-to-hand fighter and thus his favourite weapon was a short thrusting club of wood, bone, or greenstone.

The Maori was also a military engineer of considerable genius. His fortified villages complete with stockades, ramparts, ditches, observation towers, enfiling platforms, and fighting stages were model defence works that many times defied armies both civilized and native.

## **A fleet of war canoes seen by Dumont d'Urville's expedition.**

## **Belief in Spirits Influenced the Whole of Life**

**'A New Zealand Deity,' or hei tiki, sketched by John Savage in 1805. The greenstone tiki was of course not a deity, but a precious ornament greatly valued as a tribal or personal heirloom.**

**This scraper-board drawing shows a 'tuahu' or 'wahi tapu' (sacred place), where various religious and magical rites were performed. In 'The Maori As He Was' Elsdon Best states that each of these stones represented a certain**

## 'atua' (god).

THE Maori was a deeply religious person. He relied on the gods for help and protection in his work and in his play, in times of crisis and sickness, in times of danger and in times when all was going well. In fowling, fishing, warfare, housebuilding, and half a hundred other activities he used rituals and incantations, prayers, and ceremonials to secure the good favours of his gods.

His gods were many. Supreme above all and known only to the select few was the great god *Io*—*Io* the Parentless, *Io* the Eternal, *Io* the Unchanging—to give this god a few of his many names. His cult was exceedingly sacred and incantations directed to him were made only on the most urgent occasions. A second class of gods were departmental gods who presided over the various natural phenomena. The most important of these were: *Tangaroa*, god of the ocean; *Rongo*, god of agriculture; *Tane*, god of forests; *Tu*, god of war; *Whiro*, god of darkness and death; *Tawhira Matea*, god of the winds. A third class of gods were the ancestral spirits who were invoked to give help for smaller undertakings.

The Maori also believed in a group of evil spirits. These were spirits of darkness who caused disease, sickness and physical suffering. They became angry when some prohibition was broken. They could also be stirred into activity by the rites of the sorcerer. Then they entered the body of the victim. And the only thing the Maori could

**A monupent in memory of Te Whero Whero's daughter at Raroera Pa, Waikato. European influences are noticeable in this elaborate monument which was drawn by Angas during his journey through the North Island.**

**Henry Williams made this sketch of Tohitapu, old-time Maori priest. The old man sits wrapped in a trade blanket. In front of him is a fish and a basket of kumara, probably gifts for services.**

do to rid himself of his trouble was to call in the services of the priest-doctor who by suitable incantations would exorcise the spirit.

These priest-doctors were important members of the community. By their aid the Maori could secure the protection of the gods. They were generally experts. Indeed the word *tohunga* means precisely this: an expert at any activity or craft. They knew the appropriate rituals and prayers. They had been thoroughly trained in the Maori schools of learning. They knew how to communicate with the gods and how to interpret the wishes of the gods to the populace.

The Maori were not idol-worshippers. They did not bow their heads down to images of stone. On certain occasions the gods came to reside in rough wooden or stone representations. Then the priest talked to the god and, when the seance was over, the god left his temporary abiding place. Many of the simple incantations and magical sentences were known to all the people. The more elaborate ones were known only to the trained priests.

The typical Maori shrine was a small cleared place close to the village. Here there might be a rough stone set up, or a small wooden post, or there might be nothing but the clearing itself. The place was peculiarly sacred, however, and here small offerings were left so that the gods would incline a favourable ear to the

supplications of the people of the village.

## The Maori Was an Artist in Work and in Play

**This engraving from the published account of Captain Cook's first voyage shows the intricate art lavished on Maori weapons and implements. The shell trumpet (right) was used to call the people together for announcements and meetings.**

**Dumont d'Urville's artist, de Sainson, captures the rhythm of a Maori dance on the 'Astrolabe' at Tolaga Bay. Men, women, and children all appear to be enjoying the fun of this dance!**

ART for art's sake is a saying that no Maori would have understood. Art for him was an integral part of his life. It was intimately related to his economic activities, to his religion, to his social life. It was part of his life rather than an embroidery to his life, something to be enjoyed by those with education or leisure. Thus in the building of his meeting house he joined the arts of carving and design and painting to his skill as a carpenter, and produced a building that served his purpose in a beautiful way. In the weaving of his cloaks he joined the skill of the craftswoman to her love of colour and design, and the result was a garment that was warm, serviceable, and beautiful.

His attitude to the arts of pleasure was much the same. In his story-telling and oratory, in his chanting and dancing, he delighted in playing with the intricate forms of his language or with the rhythmical movements of his body. Of musical instruments he had but few: no stringed instruments, but two kinds of flute, two kinds of trumpet and wooden gongs. For rhythmical expression therefore he relied on his chanting and on his dancing. His name for a dance of any kind was *haka* (though white people to-day think of the *haka* as a men's war dance). Men and women were accustomed to dance various kinds of *haka* for all social occasions—at times of welcome or of mourning or in times of war. In some cases the arms alone were moved to the rhythm of the chanted words, in other cases the *poi* balls wereswung with graceful movement, and on still other occasions legs, arms, body, face, eyes, and tongue were all given frenzied movement in the wild rhythm of the war dance.

Many Maori games were played for exercise. Wrestling, sham-fighting, tree-climbing, swimming, surfing and other water sports were all played at for the exercise and pleasure that they gave. Other games required mental alertness or depended on memory power. Others still, such as cat's cradles, stressed both manual dexterity and agility. Maori children, like children all over the world, played their own little children's games: kite-flying and stilt-walking were favourites, and so were playing with tops and hoops and jumping and skipping.

Athletic exercises were of course played out-of-doors. And on fine summer evenings the village meeting ground presented a lively and colourful scene as the young people wrestled or vied with each other at competitive games of other types— all sunlight and shadow and glistening brown skin. Or when the evenings became dark early, small pit fires were lighted in the large common dwelling houses and there the people assembled; the old to talk of politics and village gossip; the young to amuse themselves with riddles and guessing games, jackstones, or a game curiously like draughts. And then when sleep stole softly and slowly through the house, drowsy heads fell back on soft beds of fern and matting, forgetful of the hours until the

rising sun roused the village to another day of work.

**Examples of Maori art, from Angas.  
Top—Carved box, and head of a carved wooden spear. Left—'Raised stand for supporting tapued articles consecrated to the dead.' Centre—Image of Rangihaeata. Right—Canoe stern-post. Below—Box.**

**'Whatiwhatihoe,' a Maori village under the shadow of Mount Pirongia, where the Maori 'Kind' once lived. Etched by E. W. Payton in the eighties.**

**The Maori Loved His Land and His Tribe**

**Rangihaeata's meeting house on Mana Island, drawn by G. F. Angas. Note the carvings of door and window, the carved figures supporting the gable boards, and the painted designs on the inside of the porch roof.**

It is easy to tell of Maori life from the outside, as it were; to tell of Maori games and weapons, of fishing and cultivation. It is hard to recapture the life of the old-time Maori who did Maori things and thought Maori thoughts. For there was a flesh-and-blood Maori man and woman, in spite of all our books—human beings like ourselves who lived and laughed and loved or worried and grieved in the little village by the seashore, or in the hamlet of houses that clustered together for protection from the dark, encircling forest. Children pondered then as much about life as children do to-day. Man and woman planted and harvested, danced and sang, worried about their children and generally enjoyed life as much as they could, just as adults do to-day.

Hospitality was an old Maori ideal and so were generosity and friendliness, courage and bravery. Except in times of war life was pretty well bounded by one's tribal lands and by one's fellow tribesmen. With the people of his village the Maori co-operated on all large-scale economic activities—for one of his ideals taught him that it was better to work in company and for the common good rather than to work selfishly for his own individual interests.

And democracy in a general way was also one of his ideals. In tribal meetings all the adult men of the group had a right to their say before any important matter affecting the welfare of the tribe was decided. The chief was a man of great power and prestige. In a sense, he was the executive head of the tribal corporation. But he would not enter upon any course of action unless he were assured that he received the full-hearted support of all his people. Tribal independence was an ideal that meant much to the Maori. He loved his land. He loved the

village of his birth. These were the things that gave him security in a world which was not always kind or friendly to him. And for these things the Maori was prepared to fight when the white man discovered his country and wished to take from him that which he loved and cherished. According to the white man's ideas many Maori customs may seem absurd. Some of them may even seem horrible. But the white man who cannot conquer war or economic insecurity or starvation, and the white man who has lost much of the natural freedom and joy of living, cannot afford to throw stones at the Maori glass house. For the Maori, life was generally pleasant, vigorous, and happy. He was natural and open-hearted over it, enthusiastic and hard-working. Where his descendant to-day does not always meet with the white man's approval, we can but reflect that one hundred years of intense white pressure have broken up his old way of life and not yet given him a fully satisfactory new way—and in this reflection we can find place for tolerance and understanding, if for nothing else.

**One of Angas's renderings of life in a Maori pa in the forties. He described it as 'Tu Kaitote, the Pa of Te Whero Whero, on the Waikato, Taupiri Mountain in the distance.' White blankets or cotton coverings appear to be the favourite dress of the Maori shown here.**

**This oil painting was made by W. Wright in 1912, and the original now hangs in the Auckland Art Gallery. Entitled 'A Native Gathering,' the picture shows many of the European influences in the life of the modern Maori. It is interesting to compare these two pictures with Gilfillan's lithograph (1840) on [the right of page 17](#).**

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