

Maori Society

Early visitors to Nelson recorded their impressions of Maori society and lifestyle.



Te Tau Ihu: Maori Society

In 1840 Captain F.G. Moore explored the Nelson and Golden Bay coastline in The Jewess, and in 1841 piloted the NZ Company ships from Wellington to Nelson to establish the Company's second settlement, Nelson.

Captain Moore visited Motueka Pa before European settlement of the district. He was...

“ led into a large assembly whare, about 30 feet in length by 16 in breadth, with walls 10 feet high. These were lined carefully with long reeds of the toi-toi, some stained black, some in bright natural yellow-all neat and had a particularly pretty appearance. The gable roof was high and supported by carved posts and planks. The inside of the roof was ornamented with plaited nikau branches; there were also carved doors and verandah posts, and other ornaments peculiar to Maori tastes, but all skillfully done. The floor was of rammed clay, smooth, hard and clean, covered with well-made flax mats and carpets, as was the verandah, which is always a favorite place for a “korero” or friendly chat. Altogether, the building was newly designed for an assembly house and showed great architectural skill. The whare was strongly framed and well thatched against a hot sun or cold rain, and was altogether a very desirable meeting house which was, as Aprahama explained, kept for particular occasions. Here our select party remained, exchanging many civilities and smoking our pipes for about two hours. All the youngsters were taking curiosity peeks in at the door and passing many remarks, no doubt about the unexpected visit of their old friend Kapini Moa.



When the women announced dinner was ready they invited us out of the assembly room to an open space in the village, where there were numerous new flax mats spread on the ground and flax platters for the food of the rangatiras of both sexes. Roast and steamed porker, pigeons, kakas, fish, potatoes, roast and boiled kumaras, pumpkins, pipis, mussels, etc., were dished up, which were relished by all – certainly by me, for I was hungry. I was pleased with the marked hospitality of my hosts as the leading women picked out the dainty bits for the guest of the day, all of which were washed down by draughts of pure water from calabashes, held to our mouths by charming damsels.”

Entertainment after the feast consisted of “...young men performing sundry acts of war, some very clever wrestling, some races among the young girls and boys, and some models of defences of pahs in war by the elder men.” At sunset kuia (...elder dames) signalled the end of children’s activities, elders had “...another quiet smoke” and preparations began for the promised haka:

“...the maidens were making sundry preparations for the favorite exercise that would assist to show off their graceful forms to best advantage. To this end they were being assisted by the matrons according to their rank; the long and bushy black hair was dressed and oiled, choice feathers and flowers were interwoven in their curly locks, and the cheeks, lips, chin and forehead tinged with red ochre. Their best Kaitaka mats were fastened round the waist and drooping to the knees, the upper part of the body and limbs being left bare and free and the legs and feet ditto ...

The young men, too, were not wanting in goodly proportions nor vigor of action. Most of them had some feathers in their hair and greenstone ornaments round their necks, and they, too, were stripped to the waist. When all was ready, some of the elders made an exciting speech and the actors in the drama commenced their songs, one by one, until the general choruses were demanded, then, with measured and vigorous action, they kept amazing good time of voice and attitude, such as should be seen by Europeans to be appreciated.



This display over, the warm clothing was adjusted and the merits of the 20 performers discussed. Not a few of the damsels exchanged approving signals with the young fellows. The Maoris have a complete code of language of the eyes, all sufficient for the young of either sex; but I observed the ladies had the “ayes” – more particularly in love telegraphy. Then, again, they understand how to convey messages in their simple-sounding songs, or from the three-holed flutes, which both lads and lassies can play and make the notes heard for some distance on a calm night to good account.”

After a good night’s sleep on “...a safe bed of dried raupo, or bulrushes” in the new assembly house Moore was woken – “...E moa, upanga koe te ra kerunga te maunga, ke te horoi to kanohi. E kai te kuku, te ika te kumara te wai mata makariri- Arise! The sun is on the hills! Wash your eyes and breakfast on pigeons, fish, sweet potatoes, and sweet cool water!”

After breakfast:

“...The women and young damsels, with some men, were told off to their cultivations; others, the boys, to snare birds, gather pipis, and catch eels, all more or less directed by the elder, who made me comprehend that too much moi (rest) induced indolence: that maki (work) was good for all in the morning, but when the sun began to get past the meridian it was time to bring in the food from the cultivations and to cook for all before sundown.



I was asked, after a while, to go and see some of the nearest farms. There was a fair gathering of pigs, fowls, goats, etc. It was noticeable how very kind these people were to all the animals dependent on them, which they fed and petted; and the pigs and goats followed them and their dogs and the few cats to the clearings.”

Moore was then taken into the forest “...to see the progress of a celebrated artizan, who was engaged carving a head and stern-piece for a beautifully-modelled...”rangatira waka- a chief’s state canoe....he first sketched his work, and then, with very rude stone tools, he carved and cut the graceful ornaments.”

The artist showed Moore “...some designs for tattooing and the implement, which was simply a piece of sharp shell fastened to a short supplejack and dipped into a hellew groove in a log containing the dye. The patient sat or laid on the log while the operator cut the lines on the face, arms, and other parts of the body with a little wooden hammer, and then dipped the sharp-cutting tool into the dye again; and so on until he cried out that he had had enough for this day. It was intensely painful for the patient, but the operator, like a good surgeon, only thought of the success of the cuts.”



When Moore returned to his boat he found his boatmen being entertained by “...some friendly youngsters, who were showing them how they constructed fishing nets, lines and other useful appliances – snares for birds, rats, etc,” and saw a youth and his sister snaring kaka by the traditional method of teasing a tame bird to lure others. He was “...informed that large quantities of birds and fish were caught by boys and girls of from eight to twelve years, but as a rule the parents ordered them not to torture the poor creatures, but kill them at once.”

On their arrival at Motueka, Moore had told his men to “... put all their provisions they did not immediately want into bags and hang them up to the limbs of an adjacent tree, to keep all clear of the depredations of the native rats, cats, dogs or hawks. There was no danger of any other thieves for in peaceful intercourse and unassumed hospitality it would be difficult to find more honest and conscientious people on earth than the Maoris. It is one of the greatest and most shameful reproaches to be thought or named a “tangata tai” or man-thief; or a “tangata tito” -a liar. Even a “tangata porangi” (foolish man) is looked on with disfavor, particularly if his or her folly leads to the injury of others. So our boys were safe if they remained “ tangata tika” (straightforward) in their conduct to their Maori friends while I was absent with the chiefs and their families at the larger fortified pah.”



Questions

1. How reliable is Moore's source? What might be its limitations?
2. What Maori words does Moore use? What do they mean?
3. What do these English words or phrases mean: calabash, ditto, such as should be seen by Europeans to be appreciated, induced indolence, supplejack, depredations, unassumed hospitality, reproaches, folly?
4. What materials were used to build the meeting house at the Pa?
What was used for bedding?
5. What did Moore think of the meeting house? What words did he use to support your opinion?
6. What foods did Motueka Maori have available? What did they eat for breakfast?
What did they drink? Which foods had been introduced to NZ?
7. What European habit was already in evidence? How would Maori have acquired the habit?
8. How did the young women prepare to perform? What about the young men?
What aspect of the performance particularly impressed Moore?
How did young men and women communicate with each other?



Questions

1. Who did what jobs around the Pa? What would you have been doing if you lived there?
2. What creatures at the farm were or could have been native to NZ?
3. What other work did the carver do?
4. What skills did the girls and boys have? How would they have learnt those skills?
5. What skills would European immigrant children have that Maori did not have?
6. According to Moore what behaviours brought shame in the Maori world?
7. How do these values compare with the values about to arrive with European settlement?
8. How many words can you think of to describe life at Motueka Pa?



Activities

Write:

A letter home to England describing the Maori way of life and how Maori childhood differed from English childhood.

Draw:

A map of the Pa and its surroundings

The meeting house (wharenui) as described by Moore.

Research:

What can you find out about F.G. Moore? Show your sources.

Who were the iwi living at Motueka at the time of Moore's visit? Show your sources.



Moore's Return Visit

On a later visit, Captain Moore took other Pakeha with him, and some young Maori women from Wellington.

"As soon as our little party of pakeha hou (new comers) had fairly stepped on shore we were kindly met by a party of young folk, told off to escort us to Motueka Pah, where the resident chiefs, their wives, families, and following were engaged still feasting and entertaining their guests and friends from Wellington.

As we entered the village there was quite a hearty meeting and the usual greeting of "Come, come, Kapine Moa, back to the land which you have visited before, and bring all your new friends to see us and partake of our feast and goodwill. Kapai! Kapai! ('Tis good. 'Tis good).

The scene was a busy one. All the chiefs, their guests, their wives, and young future intended warriors were assembled and doing ample justice to a good feed of roast pork, heaps of birds and fish, and piles of potatoes (roast and steamed), with green Indian corn baked in the leaf, and pumpkins and melons galore. The men, as usual on high days and holidays, were feasting apart; and the wives and maidens, according to their degree or social position, by themselves; but all were joyous and hearty, and apparently thankful for the bountiful harvest of good food the Atua Pai (the Good Spirit) had sent them as a reward for their well employed skill and industry, as shown in the fields and harvest store...



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There was a more than usual bevy of healthy, active, blooming maidens, whose frequent salutations and gleaming bright eyes bespoke a natural and undisguised welcome that no art-refinement could have improved on in gesture, expression, intention, or success. It was noticeable, however, that already the advent of the newest pakeha wahines (white wives) had in some degree been copied in dress. A few of these young natural ladies had donned white night-gowns, which were fastened by bands or sashes of broad green flax leaves round the waist, draping the general beauty of their well-proportioned and beautiful figures and limbs. A colored handkerchief or ribbon, fastened round the neck, completed the simple, but, still, graceful rig-out. A profusion of black wavy hair was decked with wild flowers, and beautiful feathers. And so they sought to copy, as far as their resources admitted, some of the garb and wakahi fashions of their white sisters from England, succeeding particularly well in the lively expression and language of the Maori maidens' eyes....

But to return to the feast – plentiful, smoking hot, good of its kind – and I was hospitably welcomed. This, to a young man with a keen appetite, was attractive. I did justice to the choice bits, when served on clean flax platters woven specially for me by the girls aforesaid, and for a while, I must own, my attention was drawn from a contemplation of the grace of the damsels to their skill in and attention to their domestic duties. A grilled pigeon, some tasty green Indian corn, and some baked pumpkin, with a drink of spring water from a calabash held by a maiden to my lips, was for me a most satisfactory and sumptuous repast; and so I partook of my share of this assembled Maori banquet, which was cleared away by 'cookies'."



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After dinner and a general smoke the conversation turned to "... *the arrival of so many pakehas from England, and what was likely to be their occupations and policy in relation to the Maoris.*" Moore explained that English people "...*cultivate farms and grow quantities of food, sheep, cattle and horses*" just as Maori cultivated their lands. He urged Maori to cultivate "...*as many grounds as you have men to work on them*", assuring them that they would be able to trade any surplus with white people for goods or money. One of the chief women "*challenged the concept of money – 'Ekaha te pai te moni? Iti iti te moni ka nui te taiwa (What is the good of money? It is small compared with potatoes)*' "; and despite Moore's argument that a handful of silver was "...*small in bulk*" and could buy many things, she insisted that "...*an exchange of provisions was the custom, and the right thing to do amongst Maoris*", adding that "...*we can properly estimate the value of things which our labor has produced; but your money is as yet a puzzle to us.*" The young women from Wellington resolved the issue by acknowledging the fairness of Maori custom, but judging that "... *the custom of the pakeha was easier, as there was not so much for the women to carry.*"

The occasion ended with some wrestling for both young men and women, girls showing their skills..."*in the use of the single-sticks*", smoking , a haka, and an inspection of progress at the new cultivations. Moore's party left the next morning after a river swim, breakfast, some friendly messages to Captain Wakefield from the chiefs, and a message from '*...the chiefs' wives and maidens... to the pakeha wahines and kotiros (white wives and girls) that they would receive a hearty welcome when they came over to Motueka from the Maori ladies; they would teach them how to make kits and kaitaka garments from flax.*"



Questions

1. How reliable is Moore's source? What might be its limitations?
2. What Maori words does Moore use in this passage? What do they mean?
3. What do these words or phrases mean – told off, doing ample justice, galore, high days and holidays, according to their degree or social position, bevy, undisguised, sumptuous, repast?
4. Who was present when Moore's party arrived at the Pa? What were they doing?
5. Were the foods the same as on his previous visit? How was the food served?
6. Were there distinctions between male and female in Maori society?
7. Were there class distinctions? What would determine someone's class in Maori society?
8. Who were the "cookies"? Is this a Maori word?
9. How had European settlement already influenced Maori lifestyle?
10. What signs of manaakitanga (care, hospitality) by Maori does Moore record?
11. What were the main Maori concerns about European settlement?



Moore found it “...quite astonishing how eager they are of knowledge or of imparting it to the preferential claimant” and was amazed by “...how well the most of the Maoris knew the general geography of New Zealand and more particularly those parts of the country where either themselves or their tribal friends had visited. These they had proper names for, which were very appropriate to distinguish one district from another or to mark some great event – such as wars, treaties, confiscations, new settlements, fertility of the land, cultivation, or facilities for fresh water or sea coast fishing. All these useful characteristics of the Maori seemed to be a general study of these intelligent Ngatiawa chiefs. I was much interested in their ground-plan maps drawn on the sandy loam of the interior of the pah, and further illustrated by leading stakes of fernstalk as we should do by dots or rings to denote a township, a river, coast lines, roads etc. I soon found the rangiteras knew much about the coast lines from Cape Farewell on to Nelson, thence through Cook’s Strait to Cloudy Bay, and thence to the eastern coast beyond the Kaikouras.”



Questions

1. What do “eager they are of knowledge”, “...or of imparting it to the preferential claimant”, “seemed to be a general study” mean?
2. Which tribe did Moore name?
3. How did Maori name localities? Can you think of some European examples of similar naming?
4. How did Maori draw maps and indicate specific places on them?
5. How would Motueka Maori have gained their geographic knowledge?
What other parts of the country did they probably know well? Why?



Activities

Write:

An essay about the good qualities Moore described in Motueka Maori.

Compare and contrast the benefits and disadvantages of the Maori way of life with the English way of life at that time.

Research:

Find out what you can about Ngatiawa (now usually known as Te Atiawa).

- Where did they come from?
- How did they come to be living at Motueka?
- Who else was living there at the time of first European settlement?

Record your sources.

Draw:

One of Moore's descriptions at Motueka pa (e.g. the scene at the meal, a young Maori woman)

A map showing the areas Moore says Maori were familiar with. Mark significant sites they may have referred to with their Maori names if you can.

A map of your own area using the Maori method to mark important places.

Make:

A flax platter on which to serve food.



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Resources

[\[Oliver, Richard Aldworth\] 1811-1889 ... | Items | National Library of New Zealand | National Library of New Zealand \(natlib.govt.nz\)](#)

Inscription: The sight of a blood thirsty old chief, who has not only slain but eaten his enemies, weeping & wailing for hours together upon meeting an old friend, is only to be found I believe in New Zealand. The one here represented took place in Motueka in Blind Bay. On the right of the house is the tomb of a chief, formed by the canoe being cut in half, painted & adorned with feathers.



Resources

[Captain F.G. Moore \(theprow.org.nz\)](http://theprow.org.nz)

[The Tangata Whenua Tribes of Te Tau Ihu \(theprow.org.nz\)](http://theprow.org.nz)

[Te Maatu: Some Early Perspectives \(nrait.co.nz\)](http://nrait.co.nz)



Moore's Memorial erected 1965 on
Haven Road in Nelson.
Nelson City Council, 2012



By the winter of 1842,
surveying of the Motueka
town sections had been
completed.



Understand	Know	Do
<p>Colonisation and settlement have been central to Aotearoa New Zealand's histories for the past 200 years.</p> <p>People hold different perspectives on the world depending on their values, traditions, and experiences.</p> <p>People participate in communities by acting on their beliefs and through the roles they hold.</p>	<p><u>By the end of Year 10</u> Movement across borders impacts on people and places.</p> <p>Interactions change people's culture and identify, communities, and countries.</p> <p>The suitability of places for living in is influenced by natural and cultural factors. The ways in which people and communities enhance or damage suitability is influenced by the resources they have available to them and by their values and perspectives.</p>	<p><u>By the end of Year 10</u> Make informed ethical judgements about people's actions in the past, basing them on historical evidence and giving careful consideration to the complex predicaments people faces, what they knew and expected, the attitudes and values of the times, and my own attitudes and values.</p>



Te Tau Ihu: A New Society

Reference List

Content created by Hilary Mitchell
based on text taken from '*Te Tau Ihu o te Waka Vol 2*'
(Huia Publishers 2007, written by Maui John Mitchell and Hilary Mitchell)

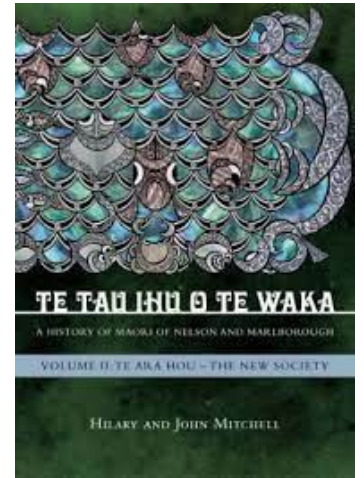
Recommended Readings:

Ruth M. Allan
'*Nelson - A History of Early Settlement*'
(AH & AW Reed, 1965)

Patricia Burns
'*Fatal Success - A History of the New Zealand Company*'
(Heinemann Reed, 1989)

Max D. Lash
'*Nelson Notables*'
(Nelson Historical Society, 1992)

June E. Neale
'*Landfall Nelson*' (1978)
'*Pioneer Passengers*' (1982)



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2022



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