

Fast Facts

TE ARAWATANGA The Way of Te Arawa

(suitable for pre/post visit)



ROTORUA
museum

Te Whare Taonga o Te Arawa
ART | CULTURE | HERITAGE

Sometime prior to 800AD Aotearoa (New Zealand) was discovered and settled by Polynesian people who travelled on epic journeys from the group of islands known today as East Polynesia.



They were the descendants of an ancient voyaging culture, which probably originated in South East Asia four thousand years ago.

Maui, Kiwa, Kupe and Ngahue reached out to all corners of the Pacific. The voyages of these great explorers are recounted in oral traditions. Polynesian ancestors were expert at travelling vast distances, even reaching South America. They brought back the kumara (sweet potato) which is still grown in Aotearoa.

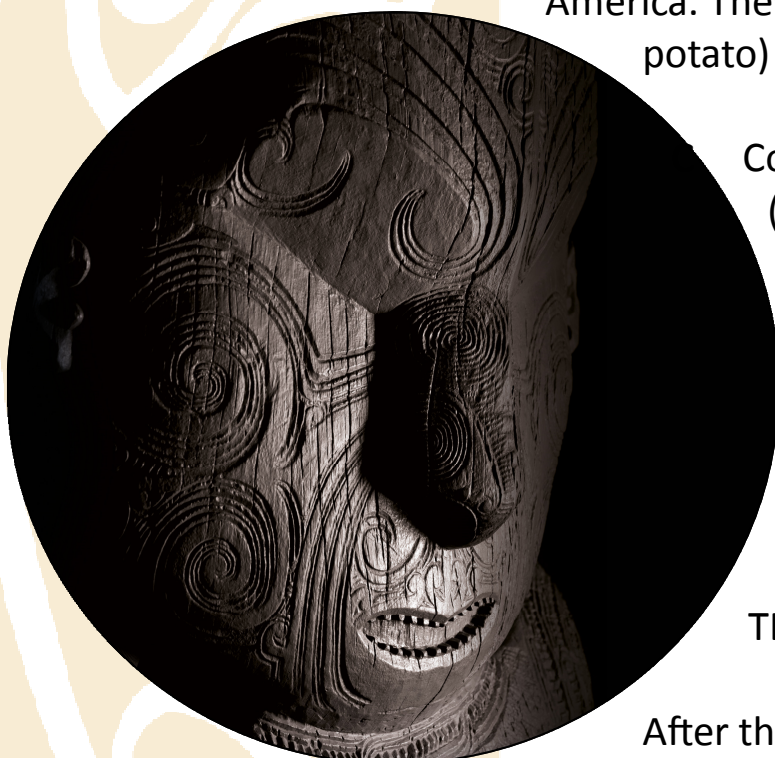


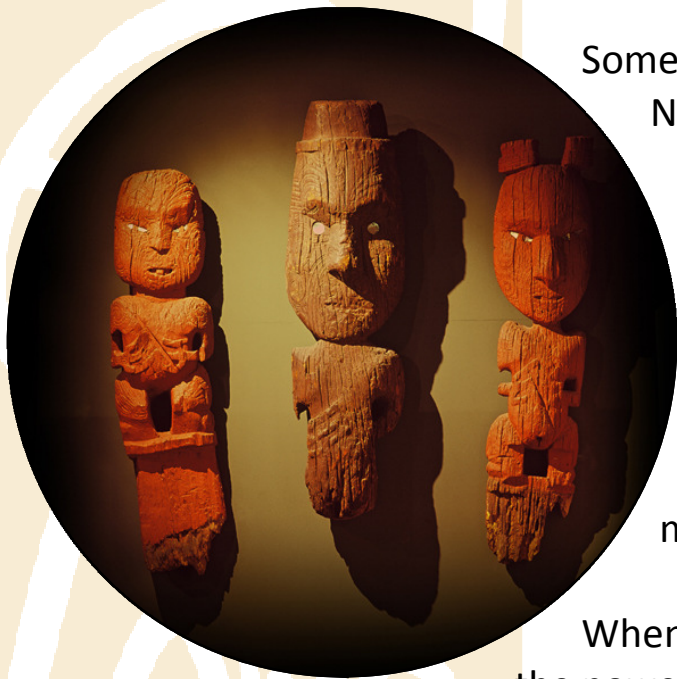
Contact with their Polynesian homelands (Hawaiki) ceased as the people settled to the new environment and found uses for the rich mineral resources.

They developed into numerous territorial and tribal groups under common ancestors.

TE ARAWA is one such group.

After the arrival of European colonists the many different tribal groups across Aotearoa became collectively known as Maori.





Some 20 generations ago lived an iwi (tribe), called Ngāti Ohomairangi in the Polynesian homelands of Hawaiki Houmaitawhiti their chief saddened by a long history of events, decided that it was time to send his people in search of new lands.

His eldest son Tamatekapua was tasked along with other members of his iwi to build a 40 metre long-twin hulled sailing vessel.

When it was completed, the powerful tohunga (navigator-priest) Ngātoroirangi was enticed to journey with the people of Houmaitawhiti in their search for a new homeland.

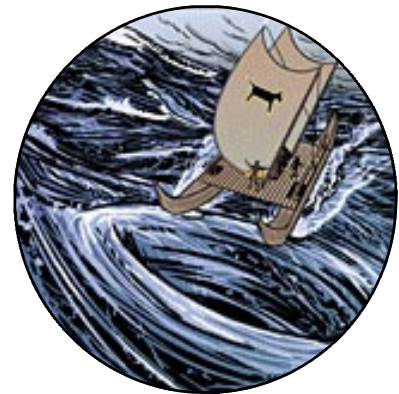
As the waka (sailing vessel) left the shores of Hawaiki, the ageing leader Houmaitawhiti bade his people farewell. Too old to travel, he stayed in Hawaiki to welcome the wairua (spirits) of his descendants back to their homeland.



The waka followed an old pathway using stars, ocean currents and wave patterns that took them to the southwest Pacific.

During the voyage our people encountered Te Korokoro ō Te Parata, a great taniwha that lived in Moana-nui-ā-Kiwa.

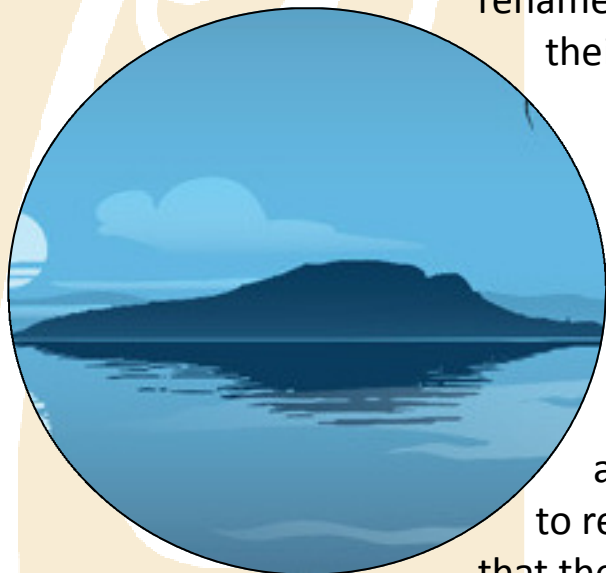
A huge whirlpool consumed almost all of their food and possessions.



The powerful incantations of Ngātoroirangi saved the people and the waka. On their journey they saw an Arawa shark. This sign from the gods and of nature it was viewed as a good omen. To mark that event they named their waka Te Arawa.

When Ngāti Ohomairangi arrived in Aotearoa, they explored the coastline of Te Ika-ä-Māui (the North Island of New Zealand). Eventually they selected Maketu in the Bay of Plenty as their home.

An incident of fire burned their waka on land while in storage. So saddened by this event they renamed themselves after their lost canoe Te Arawa.



The people dispersed throughout the region but remembered the parting words (te Ōhaaki) of their leader Houmaitawhiti as they set out on journeys of exploration.

They travelled over mountains, through valleys and across rivers, they gave every landmark a name to remind us today of ancestral events. This ensured that the land would always remain the domain of

Te Arawa's descendants.

Ihenga, the grandson of Tamatekapua, discovered the Rotorua lakes region and is responsible for many of the place names still in use today.



The tohunga, Ngātoroirangi, explored the volcanic plateau and climbed the great mountain of Tongariro.

Meanwhile, Tia settled on the shores of Taupo and Hei went north in search of lands for his descendants to occupy.

Four generations later a new Arawa leader called Rangitihi emerged. He and his eight children and their extended families (hapū) moved to the Rotorua region to live. In time the descendants of Rangitihi's eight children formed their own iwi and became known by all other tribes as "Ngā pū manawa e waru ō Te Arawa" - "The eight beating hearts of Te Arawa".

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