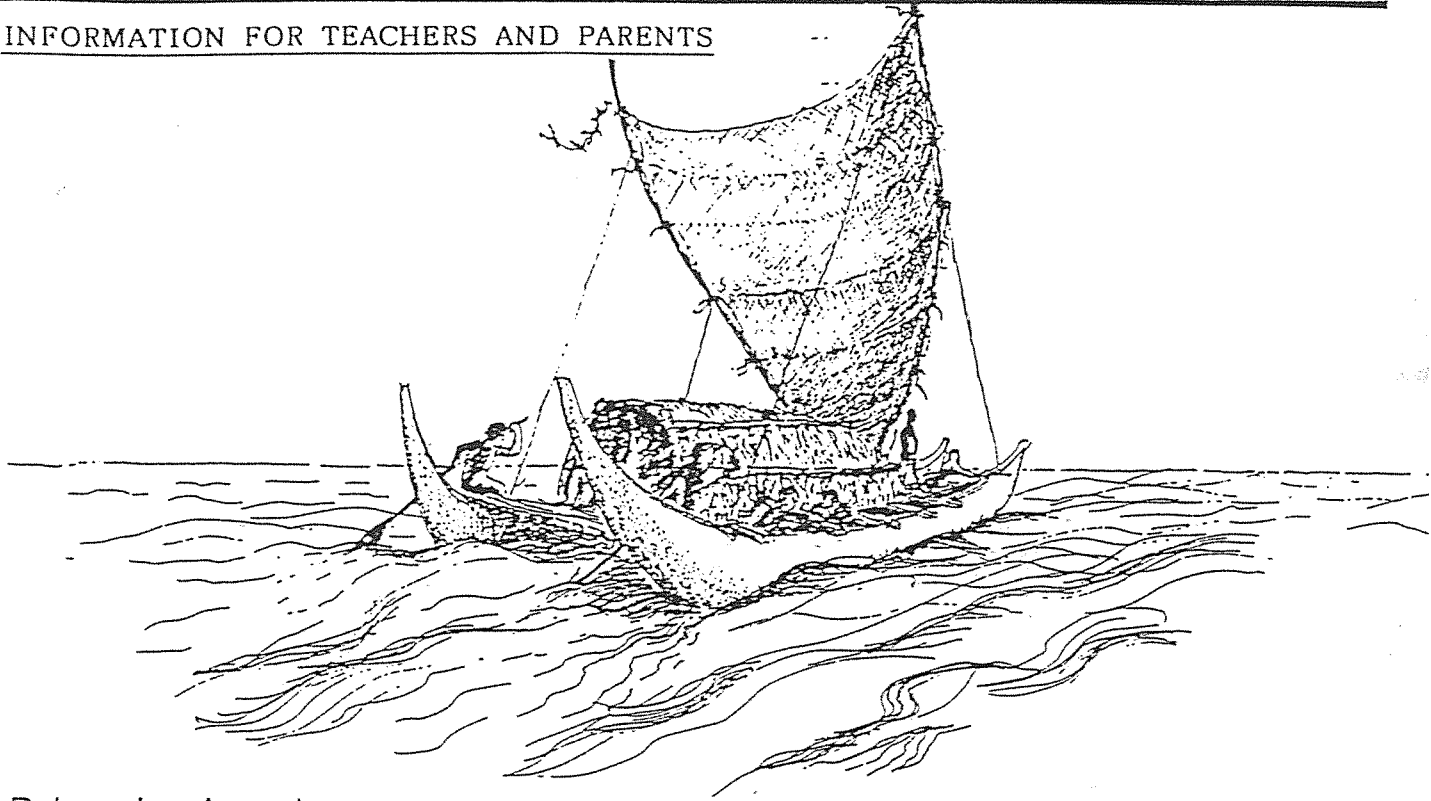


# DISCOVERING AOTEAROA

## Pacific Canoe Hall, Maori Galleries

INFORMATION FOR TEACHERS AND PARENTS



### Polynesian Ancestors

The earliest ancestors of the Polynesians first entered the Pacific between 4000 and 5000 years ago. They were stone age horticulturalists and fishermen who possessed great navigational and seafaring skills. The present opinion of archaeologists, linguists and physical anthropologists is that they migrated from island Southeast Asia eastward through Melanesia and reached West Polynesia (Fiji, Tonga and Samoa) about 1000 B.C. Over a 1000 year period of settlement in this area the "Polynesian" language and culture emerged.

Continuing the eastward movement, a group of Polynesians reached the Marquesas in East Polynesia by A.D.300. From this centre there was a great expansion of early East Polynesians, which resulted in the colonization of almost every island in the vast Polynesian triangle by A.D.800.

The longest voyages (to Hawaii, Easter Island and New Zealand) involved crossing thousands of kilometres of ocean, and would have taken several weeks to accomplish.

The early Polynesians used two types of canoe. The most common was the outrigger canoe, used for inshore fishing trips and making inter-island crossings within archipelagos or to neighbouring island groups.

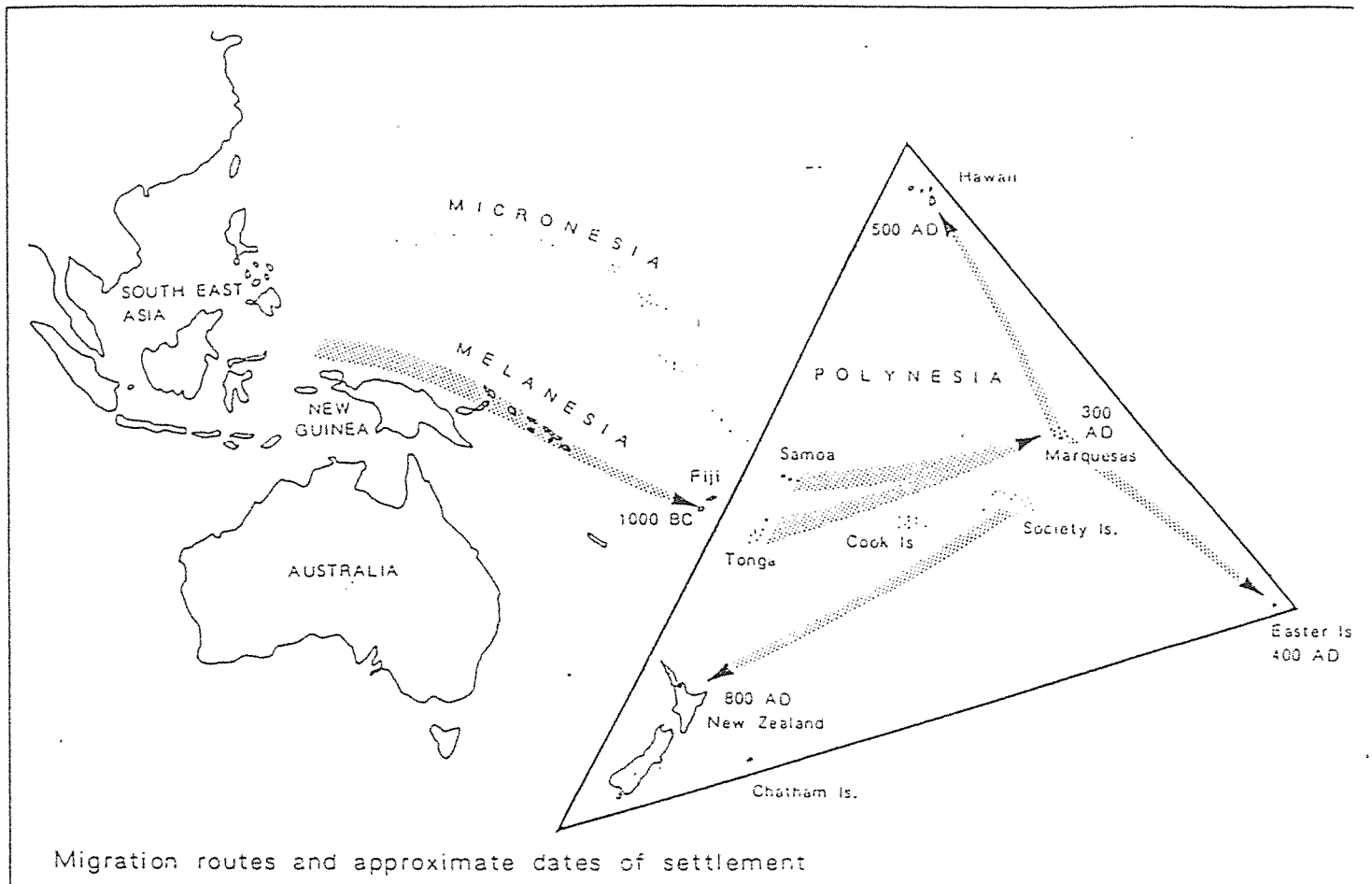
For long distance voyaging the ancestors of the Polynesians invented the double canoe which provided greater carrying capacity and stability. This craft comprised two long, narrow, plank-built hulls joined by a broad platform deck with a shelter for people, plants, animals and food supplies. They had one or two large triangular or claw-shaped sails made of woven pandanus matting. Some double canoes observed by European explorers in the 18th century were up to 37 metres long and could carry up to one hundred people. Cook estimated that a double canoe could make over 200 kilometres per day.

To understand why the Polynesians undertook such long, perilous voyages we must consider the Polynesian world view. Millennia of sailing experience taught them that the ocean stretched in all directions, and in every direction they sailed islands rose on the horizon. To the east lay uninhabited islands, suitable for colonization.

Fully stocked expeditions would probably have only set out at times of insecurity, warfare or famine. Many canoes must have been overcome by storms and hurricanes. If water and food stocks ran out before they reached land the explorers would face starvation.



Auckland Museum School Service



The major Polynesian migratory settlements were not the result of drift voyages. The eastward thrust of migration required determined sailing against the direction of the prevailing winds and currents. A viable population carrying the essential food plants and animals for establishing a colony would not be carried on a drifting fishing canoe or on a canoe blown off course on a relatively short inter-island visit. (Women did not go on fishing trips!) Great preparation of provisions was necessary before launching an expedition of 60 to 100 men, women and children. The major food plants (except for kumara) and animals were transported into West Polynesia by the first settlers. These were coconut, taro, yam, banana, breadfruit, pig, dog and chicken.

The earliest Polynesian navigators had no modern navigational instruments or maps. Horizon and zenith stars, the moon and the sun were their best directional guides. The navigator also tracked his course in relation to the dominant ocean swell and the prevailing wind. Indications of approaching land included the appearance of land-based birds, certain cloud formations, floating debris and interruptions in the swell pattern. (p26)

## The Discovery of New Zealand

New Zealand was the last major region of Polynesia to be discovered and settled. The precise homeland and the exact date of arrival and landing place of the first settlers are unknown. However it is now accepted that they probably arrived around A.D.1000, or perhaps as early as A.D.800, from an East Polynesian homeland. The evidence of language and artefacts points to the Marquesas or Society Islands.

There has been a long debate over whether New Zealand was settled from several different places or just one. However evidence for two major settlements is scant. It is now generally accepted that the first settlers were the ancestors of the modern Maori who brought with them a typically East Polynesian culture which they adapted to the New Zealand environment and developed in isolation to become the distinct "Maori" culture observed by Cook and other European explorers in the 18th century.

In many respects New Zealand differed from the familiar tropical environment left behind. Physical variation included active volcanoes, high alpine fold mountains, great

## The Discovery of New Zealand (Cont.)

inland lakes and plains and a varied coastline. New Zealand had a marginal climate for growing tropical food plants. Those brought by the first people were kumara, yam, taro, a species of cabbage tree, gourd and paper mulberry. Because of the New Zealand climate the coconut, breadfruit, banana and pandanus would not have survived if they had been introduced. The dog and rat survived the journey to New Zealand, but so far archaeologists have found no evidence for pigs and chickens.

Most of New Zealand was covered in heavy forest. Moa (perhaps 12 species) were adapted to life in the forest and along the forest fringe. There was also a wide range of other forest, water and seashore birds. The first settlers found plentiful fish and shellfish as they were used to, and also an unaccustomed range and abundance of sea mammals, especially seals, new mudflat species of shellfish, freshwater eels and crayfish. This meant that the East Polynesian pattern of subsistence was not completely re-established in the new land. However the important elements were translated and adapted to the new environment.

### Reference

Ensor S., Rountree K.  
1983

"An Introduction to New Zealand Prehistory: A Maori Studies Resource Book and Planning Guide"  
(Available from Auckland Institute and Museum.)



## LEARNING OUTCOMES

### Knowledge and Understandings:

- \* Concepts: Change, challenge, adaptation.

Conditions in even the warmest parts of New Zealand were very different from the tropical islands from which the first settlers came. They must have faced a great challenge, learning to adapt their traditional methods of survival to their new life. Accepting and facing such challenges usually requires courage and determination.

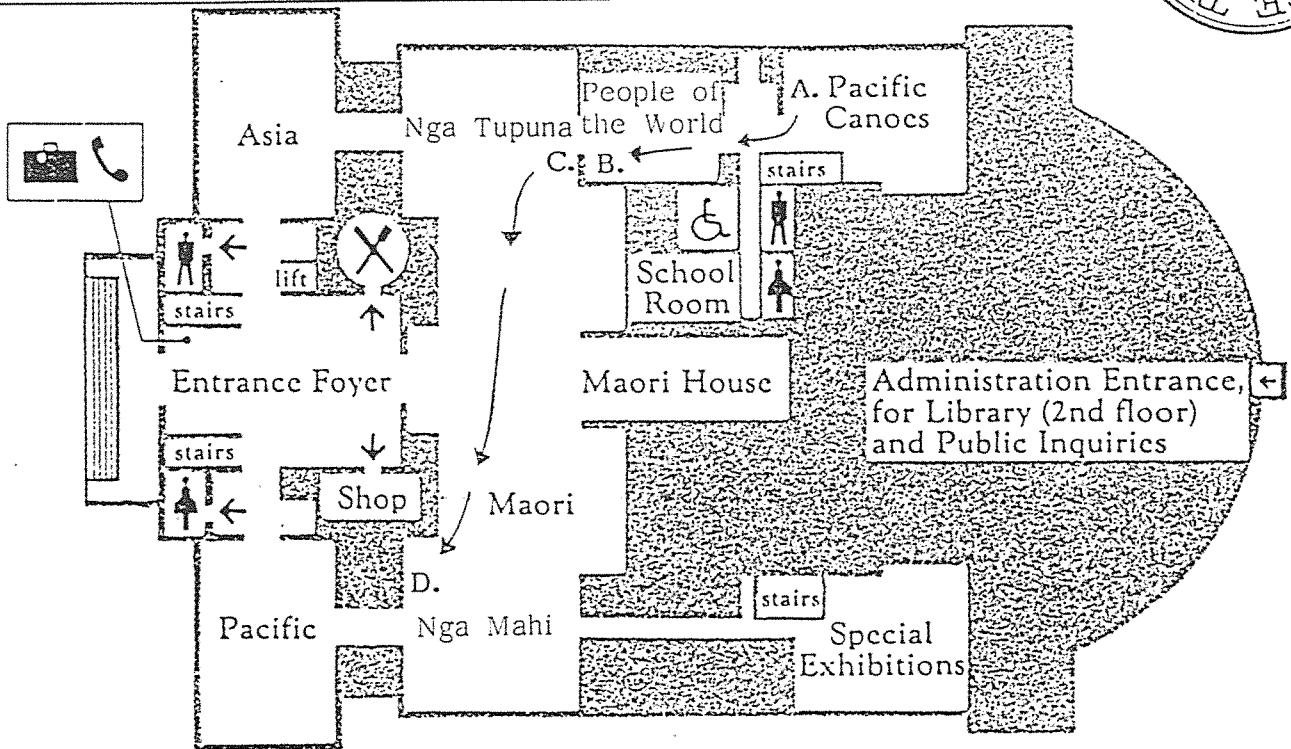
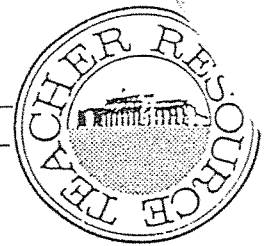
- \* Concepts: Survival, co-operation, organization.

The long, hard and dangerous voyages undertaken by the early migrants would have needed careful planning and co-operation among the crew. These people were skilled boat builders and navigators. They must have had confidence in their ability to survive.

### Skills

- \* Map and label reading
- \* Locating information
- \* Comparing
- \* Interpreting artefacts
- \* Note taking
- \* Observational drawing
- \* Asking and answering questions
- \* Forming tentative conclusions





A. PACIFIC CANOE HALL

Variety of in-shore canoes  
 Open water canoes with outriggers  
 (Fiji, Tikopia)  
 Double canoe (Cook Islands)  
 Variety of fish traps  
 Map of Pacific

B. PEOPLE OF THE WORLD

Map: Coastal Hunting Sites in N.Z.  
 Polynesian/Maori fish hooks and  
 adzes for comparison.  
 Early neck ornaments  
 Chevron pendant forms  
 Chart showing foods used by early  
 settlers.  
 Bone tools  
 Rock drawings

C. NGA TUPUNA

Rock drawings, North Otago  
 Kumete, bowl (Motiti Island and  
 Hauraki Plains)

D. NGA MAHI

ORIGINS

A, a, God, Austral Islands  
 Polynesian ancestry map  
 Lapita pottery 1500-500 B.C.  
 Model canoe, Polynesian,  
 double-hulled

Tairua lure, early fish hook  
 Fish hooks (a range of Polyn.  
 hooks for comparison)  
 Kermadec Island pendant  
 Stone and wood sculptures &  
 adzes. Comparisons of  
 Polyn./Maori material.  
 Ongari Point carving  
 Kumete, bowl  
 Patu, short clubs  
 Mangaia ceremonial adze

ARCHAEOLOGY

Wall painting, (cross section of  
 excavation site.)  
 Range of tools, weapons,  
 ornaments etc. from  
 Houhora (early site)  
 Awhitu (900-1500 A.D.)  
 Oruarangi (1500-1800 A.D.)

EARLY ART

Disc pendants  
 Imitation whale tooth pendants  
 "Reel" ornaments  
 Twin lobed pendant  
 Whale bone pendant with chevrons  
 Kumete, bowl  
 Waka Tupapaku, bone box  
 Pare, door lintel  
 Early house carvings  
 Tauihu, canoe prow  
 Taurapa, canoe stern  
 Taumata atua, stone talisman  
 Kaitaia carving

DISCOVERING AOTEAROA

NGA MAHI GALLERY: ORIGINS (Begin at the display on the left.)

Early Polynesians travelled in great sea-going canoes when they intended going a long distance. These canoes could carry 60-100 people and food provisions to last 4-5 weeks.

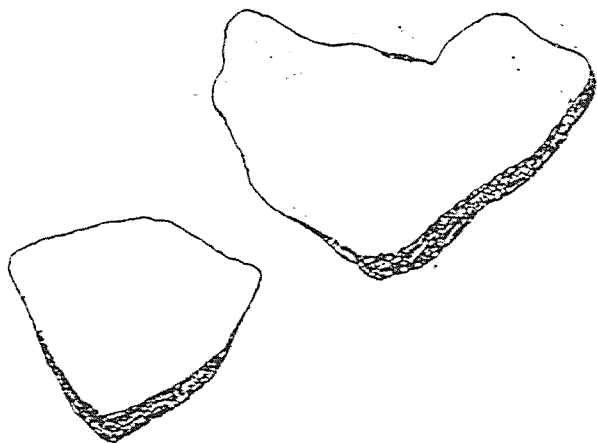
\* Look at the canoe model in the display case. How might the platform have been used?

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\* How is it suited to ocean travel?

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Between three and four thousand years ago the ancestors of the Polynesians entered the Pacific from the West. Pieces of decorated Lapita pottery have been found on sites where they lived. The pottery designs are similar to tattoo and wood carving designs.



\* Copy two different designs which were used.

Adzes and fish-hooks which have been found in New Zealand, have a similar shape to those found in Polynesia.

\* Look at the displays beside the Lapita pottery. Name the Pacific Islands where these items have been found.

Adzes \_\_\_\_\_

Fish-hooks \_\_\_\_\_

ARCHAEOLOGY (Move to the right.)

Archaeology is the study of the past through its physical remains. The things which are found on old building sites tell us something about how people once lived.

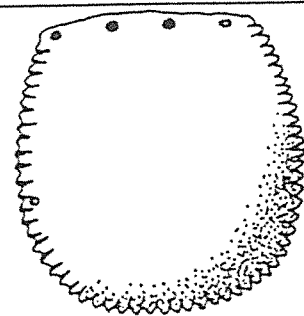
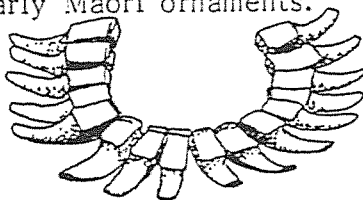
\* Find the artefacts which were dug up at Houhora. (Floor and hanging displays) What items did these people make from stone?

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What items did they make from bone? \_\_\_\_\_

EARLY ART (Move to the right.)

\* Write short labels for these early Maori ornaments.



\* What similar Polynesian items are on display in the Pacific Hall? \_\_\_\_\_

FURTHER SUGGESTIONS FOR GATHERING INFORMATION AND RECORDING

Choose one activity from each section.

DRAW FROM OBSERVATION

- \* the outline and details of an early artefact.
- \* the design used to decorate a canoe.
- \* the stitching and lashing (sennit rope) on an open water canoe.  
(Don't forget to label your drawing.)

MEASURE OR ESTIMATE

- \* the size of a canoe. (Step out the distance.)
- \* the number of people needed to paddle or sail the canoe.
- \* the size of an artefact. (Use hand or thumb spans.) How heavy might it be? Would it be easy or difficult to use?

LIST

- \* the questions you would like to know the answers to. (A Museum is a good place to find out.) Record the answers while you are at the Museum. You may like to share this activity among a group of friends.
- \* the materials used in constructing a canoe.
- \* the range of food the early settlers found to eat.

NOTE

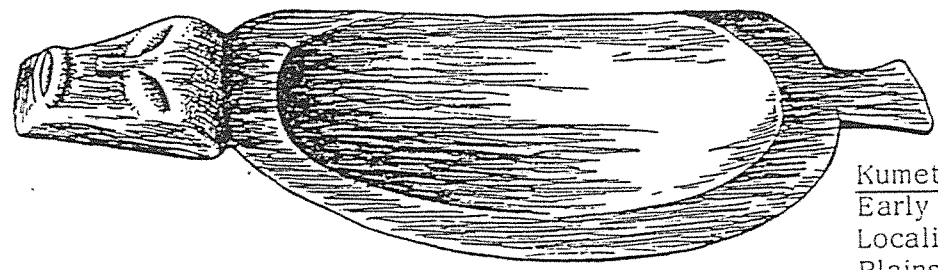
- \* any symbols or designs that have been repeated.
- \* the similarities or differences between early Maori artefacts and Polynesian artefacts.
- \* any unusual features about an artefact.

SPECULATE

- \* how these people made their tools.
- \* how long it took to make the tools or equipment.
- \* how these people helped each other.
- \* what the thoughts and feelings of these people might have been.

DISCUSS

- \* the problems there might be in using a stone adze.
- \* the responsibility of being a navigator on a long discovery voyage.
- \* how you would set about building a canoe.



Kumete, wooden bowl  
 Early Maori  
 Locality: Mangatarata, Hauraki Plains  
 The stylized human face on the food bowl relates to other archaic Maori renditions, suggesting that this bowl also dates from a very early period.