

History is the story of the human occupation of a place compiled from surviving evidence. There are many periods of the Maori history within New Zealand, in my essay, I will compare and contrast Maori society between traditional periods and the arrived of Europe periods, evaluate the impacts of colonization of Maori society and conditions in Maori culture during two eras.

Around 3500 years ago the Polynesian culture began to expand eastwards from the Bismarck Archipelago. The exact reasons for this expansion are as yet unknown. The exact date of Polynesian settlement of the islands of New Zealand is also unknown. Although previously thought to have been between 950 -1130 AD, scholars now debate both the time and circumstances of first Polynesian settlement. The mythical Polynesian navigator, Kupe, was estimated by ethnologists in the 19th and early 20th centuries as having arrived around 925. By the same scholars, the mythical Maori figure Toi was estimated as having visited New Zealand in 1150. The Great Fleet, considered to be the first mass arrival of Polynesian settlers, was estimated to have arrived in 1350. Modern scholars are now questioning not only the exactitude of the above dates, but also the Great Fleet theory itself. The debate continues today. (<http://www.history-nz.org>)

The transitional period is distinguished by an evolution of the art that now moved away from its Polynesian roots to become unique - and a more settled lifestyle that focused on local resources. The ocean-going canoes were no longer a primary purpose - cultivation of food and its preservation had replaced the explorative and roving lifestyle. This led inevitably to the establishment of fortified settlements - growing crops and stored food had to be protected. The groups of Maori who were now settling into regions also became more focused and organized as unique sub-tribes of the original canoes, and were claiming territory. The Great Fleet forms part of the Maori canoe tradition, handed down orally from generation to generation. According to this tradition, the canoes of the Great Fleet arrived from the mythical homeland of Hawaiki, known as the ancestral homeland, and generally considered as being somewhere in Eastern Polynesia. (<http://www.history-nz.org>)

Maori had divided and become individuated as unique tribal groups. The tribal era that had emerged by the 16th century established two pre-occupations apart from the maintenance of life: that of competition with other tribes, and with prestige. Although Maori culture was a totally stone-age culture until the arrival of Europeans and the introduction of metal, it was highly evolved. The various working materials used before the Maori had access to metal were mainly bird bones, whale bones, ivory teeth, both dog and human bones, and also stone, from the large stone resources which had been discovered further inland within New Zealand. (<http://www.history-nz.org>)

In 1769, English explorer James Cook displayed a more comprehending regard of New Zealand's inhabitants. Maori life changed as a result of the European presence. Maori would take up many of the gifts offered by the evangelists: western culture such as literacy, Christianity and agricultural and pastoral techniques. Most Maori who came into contact with Cook during his visit, however, particularly in Mercury Bay, the Bay of Islands and Queen Charlotte Sound, appeared to respect and admire him. (History of New Zealand, Michael King, 2003)

In spite of such diversity and divisiveness, most Europeans rarely distinguished one Maori from another or one tribe from another- a fact especially evident in cartoons of the Maori in the late nineteenth century. The dispositions of such communities, the provision of communal meeting, cooking and eating facilities, the style of houses, the materials from which they were built, the nature of the activities that went on in and around them, the language that was spoken, the kind of food that was eaten and the manner in which it was prepared, the general broadcasting of excreta- all these features suggested to Europeans a distinctively Maori lifestyle, and one that seemed indistinguishable from place to place. (Michael King: 1000 years of Maori history, 1997, pp46.)

Traditional Maori clothing had gone out of general use by the 1850s (and much earlier in

communities involved in whaling and trading and those close to European settlements). As the settler population had swollen in the previous decade, so European clothing had become widely available, new and second-hand, along with blankets. Clothing and blankets were sold by traveling merchants and storekeepers who reaped excessive rewards in some areas, exploiting the market for both commodities. There was a simultaneous Maori demand from the same entrepreneurs for pipes, tobacco, axes, spades, cooking utensils (especially billies, camp ovens, kettles, buckets and knives), and for metal to make other tools. (Michael King, 1000 years of Maori history, 1997, pp46.)

Traditional garments made from flax, flax-type plants and dog skins had been time-consuming to prepare and had not provided satisfactory protection and warmth. Blankets were welcomed as a means of keeping warm at night without having to rely entirely on fires inside house without chimneys, which had detrimental effects on eyesight and lungs. Blankets were also adopted widely as garments: typically one around the waist would serve as a skirt or kilt, one around the shoulders as a shawl; people also took to wearing them toga fashion, in imitation of traditional cloaks. As the century wore on traditional clothing-cloaks, waist mats flax skirts and so on- came to be used exclusively as ceremonial costume. They would often be worn as part of haka and action-song performances or, in the case of cloaks, placed over European dress to emphasize the person's Maori identity or rank within the Maori community. (Michael King: 1000 years of Maori history, 1997, pp46.)

Generally in the nineteenth century Maori settlements continued to be built around hapu membership and they ranged in size from half a dozen households to several hundred. Each community was likely to have five kinds of building: sleeping house; communal cookhouses; storehouses shelters for storing wood; and-with increasing frequency as the century drew near its close-community meeting houses. A whare mehana might shelter an extended one. It would be used for sleeping and for the storage of personal possessions, rarely for cooking and eating, which would more commonly take place in community facilities. The size and style of these and other Maori constructions gradually changed with the availability of European tools, garments, utensils

and other materials. Maori were learning, from Europeans, and from their own discoveries abroad, about modern warfare - the American Wars of Independence were over, and the Napoleonic Wars had just ended, with the military stratagems learnt. The Maori were acquiring capable military training by studying Pakeha. (Michael King: *1000 years of Maori history*, 1997, pp47.)

At the very time when prospects for Maori survival seemed bleakest, the seeds for racial and cultural recovery were already sown. By the 1890s the population decline had run its course. Maori generally were acquiring immunity from the diseases that had earlier taken such shocking tolls, as a consequence of previous exposure and of marriage with Europeans. Further, patterns of leadership were changing, increasingly the way was opening for men, and women, with acquired vocational or organizational skills, quick wits and eloquence to make bids for community and tribal leadership against or alongside those whose claim was purely hereditary. (Michael King: *1000 years of Maori history*, 1997)

To sum up, this essay I used reference to analyzed of how Maori life changed as a result of the European presence to New Zealand, discussed the factors shaping Maori society during the two periods.

Reference:

Michael King, (1997), *1000 years of Maori history*, Reed, New Zealand.

Michael King, (2003), *History of New Zealand*, Penguin, New Zealand.

<http://www.history-nz.org> New Zealand in History