The history and future of New Zealand Maori rock-art – a tribal perspective

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DOI: https://doi.org/10.3828/bfarm.2003.1.9

Language: English

Pages: 9

Abstract

Colonisation, dispossession, land claims and cultural resurgence. These are all phases in the recent colonial and post-colonial history of New Zealand Maori rock-art. The greatest concentration of this rock-art is found on New Zealand’s South Island and was made by the ancestors of the Ngai Tahu Whanui tribe. Rock-art represents a visual art heritage for a people who have not maintained the Maori wood carving traditions for which the North Island tribes are renowned. With a view to protecting the works of our ancestors and enriching the lives of present and future generations, Ngai Tahu Whanui is today at the forefront of exploring inclusive ways to research, document, manage and promote Maori rock-art.

References


New Zealand was one of the last landmasses to be colonized by humans. When Pleistocene megafauna had gone extinct elsewhere in the world, New Zealand was still inhabited by the moas, giant flightless birds that were hunted by early Maori settlers. The ancestors of the Maori settled one of the last truly pristine wildernesses without human activity and they continue to adapt to new environments as the world changes. Origins of the Maori Culture. At the time of the Maori arrival, New Zealand was covered in forests inhabited by primordial beasts. It was cooler than the Polynesian homeland of the Maori, which meant that some staple Polynesian crops were more difficult to grow there or simply could not be grown, such as breadfruit, coconut, and banana. The Maori arrived in New Zealand in the 10th century
AD. They called the new land Aotearoa, which means Land of the Long White Cloud. The Maori brought dogs and rats. They also brought yams and kumara or sweet potatoes and gourds. The Maori also ate fern roots. Maori society was tribal. Each person belonged to a family or whanau, a sub-tribe or hapu, and the full tribe or iwi. Warfare was common in New Zealand. The Maori are famous for their wood carvings. They also make pendants or tikis from whalebone. The Maori are also famous for their tattoos or moko, which were made with a bone chisel, a mallet and blue pigment. Colonial New Zealand. The first European to sight New Zealand was Abel Tasman on 13 December 1642.