

THE MAORI

History

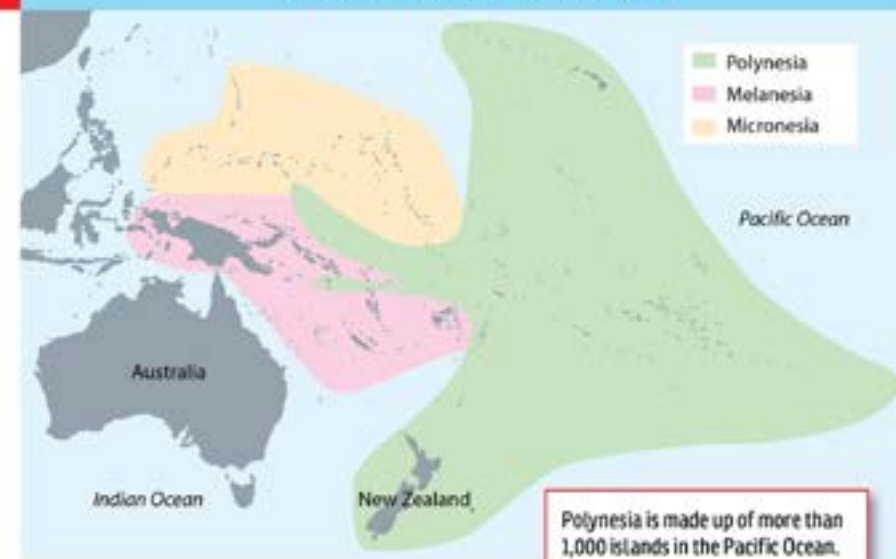
The Maori are the *indigenous* or native people of New Zealand. Nearly a thousand years ago, the Maori people came from the islands of Eastern Polynesia. These skilled sailors journeyed to New Zealand in canoes called “waka”. These Polynesian origins have greatly influenced the Maori culture’s food, language, song and dance.

The first Maori leader to make the voyage to New Zealand was Chief Kupe. He arrived there around AD 950 – more than a thousand years ago – in a great waka.



Maori tribe members in a waka

Polynesia and the surrounding area



Kupe was so impressed with the new land that he returned home to tell the rest of his people. They followed him back to New Zealand and began settling the untouched land.

In the early 19th century, settlers and whalers from Europe arrived on the shores of New Zealand. Wars broke out between the Maori and the Europeans. In 1840, a treaty known as the Treaty of Waitangi was signed between Maori chiefs and the British. Since that time, the two cultures have gradually merged together. Today the Maori culture, which is rich in tradition and legend, plays an important role in New Zealand society.