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Sustaining each other
New Zealand (Aotearoa)
In Aotearoa (the Māori name for New Zealand) relationships within the Māori community are greatly valued. The focus of each community is the marae, an open space where important gatherings and meetings are held.

Each marae belongs to a different tribal group and there is often a meeting house at its centre. When visitors come to the marae, the host group demonstrates its authority and prestige through the quality of their oratory, observance of tribal protocol, their hospitality and, most importantly, the meeting house (wharenui) itself.


© 2009, Scott Boswell
Gatherings held on the marae are an opportunity for people to support each other and reaffirm family ties.

Weddings, funerals, birthdays, political meetings and less formal gatherings take place on the marae. They often begin with a welcoming ceremony, or pōwhiri. A woman from the host group will start with a continuous call that invites visitors onto the marae. Her call creates a rope pulling visitors towards the most sacred space, the marae ātea, directly in front of the meeting house.

Haere mai ra
Come forward

Nga manuhiri tūārangī e
Visitors from afar

Haere mai, haere mai.
Welcome, welcome.

Mauria mai ā koutou tini mate
Bring with you the spirits of your dead

Kia mihia
That they may be greeted

Kia tangihia.
That they may be mourned.

Piki mai, kake mai
Ascend, ascend

Whakaekea mai te marae tapu
Ascend the sacred marae

O te iwi e.
Of our people.

Haere mai, haere mai, haere mai.
Welcome, welcome, welcome.
Fighting staffs, taiaha

Distinguished visitors to marae are often greeted with a challenge, or wero, from a male member of the host group. He approaches them slowly, swinging a taiaha. Before the visitors can move forward, they must pick up the small dart or twig laid before them to indicate they accept the challenge and come in peace.

Oc.7362 kākā feather, 1800s; Oc.6020 pāua shell, possibly Taranaki, 1860s; Oc1902, Loan 01.24 textile collar, possibly Arawa tribe, 1880s; Oc1854,1229.7 & Oc1921,1014.3 trumpets, probably North Auckland, late 1700s
2 **Neck ornaments, hei-tiki**

Personal ornaments have always been significant in Māori culture. They are sometimes passed from one generation to the next as heirlooms. At funerals hei-tiki (neck pendants) and other treasures may be brought out and placed on or near the coffin. Giving an ornament or weapon a personal name increases its spiritual power. The acrylic tiki, ‘Te Aonehe’, was made by contemporary Māori artist George Nuku and shares a name with his son.

2008,2029.1 acrylic, by George Nuku, 2008; Oc.1727 possibly Northland, mid-1800s and Oc1922,0606.1 possibly Rotorua, 1700s, both nephrite

3 **Cloaks**

Cloaks are used in various ways. Some may be reserved for ceremonial occasions. They are cultural treasures that are usually kept by the family of the maker and worn by them or lent to others, each time enhancing the prestige of the wearer. Feather cloaks with colourful geometric patterns became popular at the end of the 1800s. Today many native birds are protected and their feathers are only used in small quantities.

Oc1994,04.87 pukeko and pheasant feathers by Diggeress Te Kanawa 1993–1994; Oc1982,Q.718, goat hair, early 1800s
The *wero* is performed for a group of visitors waiting to come onto the marae. Ngāti Te Rorooterangi tribe, Rotorua, 2007.

Photo: Krzysztof Pfeiffer

Mourners at the coffin of the late Maori Queen, Dame Te Atairangikaahu. Tūrangawaewae Marae, Ngaruawahia, 2006.

Photo: Peter Drury
The meeting house named Tama te Kapua at Ohinemutu, Rotorua. Originally built in 1878 and reopened in 1943.

Photo: Robin Morrison. Auckland Museum
Objects displayed here

4 Carved ancestral figures, *tekoteko* and *poutokomanawa*
   The wharenui is named after an important ancestor or event. The house is likened to the ancestor's body, with the head at the gable and arms outstretched to welcome kin and visitors. Carved figures represent other ancestors. The eyes are inlaid with *pāua* shell, deliberately creating an intensely powerful gaze.

Oc1927,1119.4 gable figure, probably East Coast, 1860s; Oc1901,,-39 interior central post figure, probably East Coast, 1880s; 2009,2008.3 central pole, acrylic, by George Nuku, 2009

5 House bargeboards, *maihi*
   Before the mid-1800s, the war canoe and the village storehouse were the main focus of tribal pride and prestige. The large, carved meeting houses that replaced them provided new opportunities for carvers to experiment with methods and design. They were places for tribes to discuss how to deal with the new European settlers and their tribal lands. The artist George Nuku, who made the acrylic house panels here, innovatively uses materials available today. Nuku considers these materials of equal value to traditional timbers.

**Front side posts, amo**

The pair of wooden posts (above left and right) here are each carved with two male ancestors, probably of the Rongowhakaata tribe. They are decorated with *rauponga* patterns, named after the native New Zealand curling fern frond. The bold and confident carving style exemplifies the dynamism of the period in which they were made.

Oc1894,0716.1 & Oc1894,0716.3 bargeboard supports, Poverty Bay, East Coast, 1830s–50s; Oc1904,1206.1 model meeting house, made by Piwiki Horohau of the Ngāti Raukawa tribe, early 1900s

‘Maoris plaiting flax baskets’, by Gottfried Lindauer, 1903. This house provided the inspiration for the acrylic house panels created by George Nuku.

©Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tamaki

Carving in display case, top of pole
Orators’ staffs (tokotoko) are used to great effect by speakers on the marae. Men brandish them to emphasise the words of a chant that often begins:

**Tihei mauri ora!**
I breathe life!

Having claimed his right to speak, the orator acknowledges the spirits of the dead before turning his attention to the living, the present moment and the purpose of the gathering.

**Te hunga mate ki te hunga mate**
The dead to the dead

**Te hunga ora ki te hunga ora**
The living to the living

The late Wihapi Te Amohau Winiata of the Ngāti Whakaue tribe at his home marae, Te Papa-i-Ouru, at Ohinemutu, Rotorua, 2004.

Photo: Krzysztof Pfeiffer
When visitors come to a marae and participate in the welcoming ceremony they become tapu (divine or sacred). Visitors can only enter the wharenui once the tapu (divine power) is removed by physical contact: hariru (shaking hands) and hongi (pressing noses and so sharing the breath of life).

Oc.7221 & Oc.7003

Che Wilson at Raketapauma Marae using his great-grandfather's staff, 2006.

Photo: Gail Imhoff
8  **Door and window lintels, pare**  
The lintel above the door of a meeting house removes any lingering tapu (divine or sacred power) visitors bring with them as they enter the house. It protects both hosts and visitors from spiritual danger. Female figures refer to the ability of women to neutralize tapu, and may be flanked by spiritual guardians such as the bird-like manaia figures seen here on the lintel to the right.

Left: Oc1927,1119.3 lintel, probably Bay of Plenty, 1860s–80s; Oc1894,0716.4 & Oc1894,0716.5 door jambs, Poverty Bay/ Rongowhakaata tribe, 1820s–40s

Right: Oc1927,1119.2 lintel, probably Hawke’s Bay, 1860s; Oc1944,02.803.a & Oc1944,02.803.b door jambs, possibly East Coast, 1800s

9  **Clubs, patu ēnewa, mere pounamu, wahaika**  
Clubs or cleavers were effective close-combat weapons, kept in warriors’ belts. The history of named weapons and their role in battles and peace agreements are remembered and retold by the tribes they belong to. This whalebone club (wahaika) is named Hine Te Ao after an important woman of the Ngāti Raukawa tribe who seized the club when her brother was almost killed with it. Today clubs are used on important occasions and in cultural performances on marae or at other venues.

Oc1854,1229.5 nephrite, Waikato, 1700s; Oc1854,1229.7 whalebone, Waikato/ Hauraki, early 1800s; Oc.1698 basalt, possibly Northland, 1700s
Food bowls, *kumete*

Beautifully carved bowls like these were used in the past for serving food to guests. The sharing of food brings the welcoming ceremony to a conclusion. Food is offered in generous quantities as a demonstration of hospitality. This is as important to tribal pride as the speeches made on the marae ātea.

Oc,LMS.152 probably East Coast, 1840s–50s; Oc1944,02.799 probably Poverty Bay, 1820s

Deedee Nielson performing with a *patu* at Auckland Museum, 2008.

Photo: Krzysztof Pfeiffer

Makereti (Maggie) Papakura was a famous tourist guide from Whakarewarewa in the 1890s, before she moved to England. She is shown here outside her carved house, Te Rauru.

British Museum AOA Oc,B9.20
Sustaining each other

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Left: Weavers of the Ngāti Whakaue tribe at their meeting house Tama te Kapua, at Ohinemutu, Rotorua, North Island, 2007

Right: Visitors waiting to go on to Otakou Marae, Otago Peninsula, South Island, 1984.
Sustaining each other

**Continuing traditions**

To construct a fully decorated wharenui (carved meeting house) a community must sustain skills in weaving and carving. Both art forms were revived by dedicated organisations in the 1900s.

For Māori practitioners, the creation of an artwork is just as important as the end product. They consider natural materials to have a life essence of their own. The entire production process is controlled by ritual to ensure the safety of the makers and the health of the resources. The finished work not only carries the power and prestige (mana) of the maker but honours the ancestors who passed these skills down.

Lyonel Grant, an internationally renowned carver of the Ngati Pikiao tribe.

Photo: Krzysztof Pfeiffer
Objects displayed here

11 Plaited baskets, kete
In the past kete were made for specific purposes, such as gathering sweet potato. Today, baskets are still made to carry food. The baskets here were made as accessories. They are plaited from strips of flax using a technique known as raranga. The small basket decorated with feathers is made from the strong inner fibres of the flax leaf, twined together in the same way cloaks are constructed.


12 Mat, whāriki
Finely plaited mats are associated with kinship and hospitality. They are mainly used for important community events. A bridal party may stand on a mat during a wedding. Mats may be placed on meeting house porches and floors when guests are expected. They are skillfully constructed using the raranga plaiting technique. Bands of plaiting must be joined together to create the desired width of mat.

Oc1994,04.110 by Katarina Monica Kepa Konui, 1994
Weavers of the Ngāti Whakaue tribe plaiting a *whāriki*, at Ohinemutu, Rotorua, 2007.

Photo: Krzysztof Pfeiffer

Taurirotangi Pouwhare, Hikitia Ranga, Yvonne Rewi, Titihuia Grace, Parehuia Tamepo, Minnie Pouwhare, of Painoaiho Marae, Murupara, Bay of Plenty, 2005.

Photo: Poia Rewi
These acrylic carvings and painted rafters complete the roof of this meeting house. They were made by George Nuku, a Māori artist and carver.

Nuku has created these works in dialogue with the wooden carvings here. The dynamic style of the wooden, upright posts (amo) have influenced his design of the acrylic house panels. Expert practitioners have always been important in upholding Māori traditions. Exuding power and dynamism, Nuku's work sends a clear message about the state of Māori art today – living, evolving and conversant with modern technology. Nuku is from the Ngāti Kahungunu and Ngāti Tūwharetoa tribes. He is also of Scottish and German descent.

George Nuku and a meeting house he carved from polystyrene at the Sainsbury Centre for the Visual Arts, University of East Anglia, Norwich, 2006.

Photo: Kerry Brown
Māori in Britain

Hinemihi o te Ao Tawhito (Hinemihi of the Old World) is the name of the only meeting house in Britain, at Clandon Park in Surrey. The house was built in 1881 in Te Wairoa in New Zealand's North Island. The fourth Earl of Onslow purchased the house and transported it to Surrey in 1892. Today the Ngāti Hinemihi tribe are working with the National Trust to ensure it is correctly preserved.

There are several thousand Māori living in Britain today. One Māori organisation in London, Ngāti Rānana, has an annual gathering at Hinemihi in Surrey (see photo). Other groups include Te Kōhanga Reo O Rānana, a children's group, and Maramara Tōtara, who practise the art of weaponry. Members of Ngāti Rānana have advised the Museum on this display.

© 2009 Scott Boswell
Objects displayed here

13 **Kōwhaiwhai rafters, heke**

The rafters of a meeting house are painted with red, black and white kōwhaiwhai patterns. These are made up of curved lines with circular bulbs and double spirals. Each pattern embodies the life essence of an animal, fish or plant. The rafter patterns represent branching family lines, which flourish as plants do when a tribe has power and prestige. The ridgepole is the backbone of the founding ancestor to whom the meeting house is dedicated. The rafters are the ribs.


© Rongowhakaata tribe and Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa
Sustaining each other

Safeguarding knowledge

Māori oral tradition tells of three baskets of knowledge being brought down to humans from the twelfth heaven by the god Tāne.

Some knowledge is considered tapu (divine or sacred) so access to it is restricted and it must be handed down in the correct setting. Elders must balance these restrictions to ensure that cultural traditions are preserved for future generations.

Today elders educate younger people in tribal lore on the marae. Certain individuals may be chosen to become specialists in tribal genealogies, traditions and ritual practice. This information is often committed to memory without the aid of writing. In the past specialists were trained in separate schools of learning.

Billy Bird with staff and students of Te Kura Kaupapa Motuhake o Tawhiuau. Painoaiho Marae, Murupara, Bay of Plenty, 2005.

Photo: Poia Rewi
Woven house panels, *tukutuku*

Colourful, woven panels are placed between the wooden panels along the inside walls of a meeting house. Surrounded by depictions of illustrious ancestors, *tukutuku* and their patterns emphasise human pursuits. The pattern of concentric diamonds is named after the flounder, a delicious, flat fish found near beaches and estuaries.

Oc1994,04.105; Oc1994,04.106 made by Emily Rangitiaria Schuster and the Maori Arts and Crafts Institute, 1995

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Hone Sadler, academic and elder of the Ngāpuhi tribe, at Waipapa Marae, University of Auckland, 2007.

Photo: Krzysztof Pfeiffer

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Objects displayed here

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Oc1994,04.105; Oc1994,04.106 made by Emily Rangitiaria Schuster and the Maori Arts and Crafts Institute, 1995
Kiwi feather cloak, *kahu kiwi*
A cloak like this would have taken over a year to make with each feather individually attached. The flax represent descent lines reaching into the ancestral past. Weaving knowledge passes down these lines to individual weavers, whose work reflects the accumulated prestige of the tribe. Today the native kiwi bird is protected, so cloaks made with large quantities of their feathers are no longer produced.

Oc1982,Q.736 kiwi feathers, including albino kiwi

Interior house post, *poupou*
This is an interior wall panel identified by New Zealand scholar Roger Neich as being from a meeting house carved for the chief Karaitiana Takamoana of Pakowhai, Hawke's Bay. Carved figures of tribal ancestors like this link presentday descendants with the past and are vehicles for the re-telling of tribal history and events. They were often made from tall forest trees such as *tōtara*. Tribal chiefs are likened to *tōtara*: they maintain the strength of the group, just as the posts support the structure of the meeting house. To say ‘a *tōtara* has fallen' describes the death of an important leader.

Oc1922,0512.1 East Coast, Ngāti Porou tribe, 1870s
Portraits above (left to right)

**Essy Talbot**
Elder of the Ngāti Whātua tribe
Reweti Marae, South Kaipapa 2008
Photo: Krzysztof Pfeiffer

**Portrait of a Māori man**
about 1860-1890
British Museum AOA Oc,B1.10
Photo: G.W. Bishop

**Richard Niania**
of the Ngāti Kahungunu tribe
Te Reinga Falls, near Wairoa 2004
Photo: Krzysztof Pfeiffer

**Portrait of a Māori woman**
Early 20th century
British Museum Oc,A38.16
Photo: F. J. Denton

**Nettie Norman**
performing at Auckland Museum 2008
Photo: Krzysztof Pfeiffer

An early 20th century studio photograph of two women wearing feather cloaks.

British Museum AOA Oc,B4.11