



MĀORI VILLAGE

Te Wero (the challenge)



Te Wero; The challenge. The early Maori worked hard from sun up until sunset. They cleared and cultivated the land with primitive tools. They had few medicines but they also had few diseases. Like most ancient people, they lived only about thirty years. Very few lived into their forties or later.



New Zealand was much colder than Polynesia and so Maori had to make many changes to how they lived. They made warmer clothing and houses and they adapted very quickly to the new land utilizing its natural resources in which to survive. The houses were small and sometimes smoky from fires. They were grouped in villages and often close to a Pa (fortified village). Food was stored at the Pa so if the village was attacked the people knew they would be safe on the fortified hilltop.



Warfare was a major part of early Maori life and tribes often fought each other. Danger was a daily hazard. They often fought for “Utu” (revenge) or payment. Many tribes were friendly, they entertained and traded gifts with each other.

Before a guest is welcomed onto the village, they are challenged to ascertain whether they have come as a friend or an enemy. A warrior of great courage was selected and sent outside the safety of the palisaded village, to challenge the visiting group.

He would taunt and provoke them with movements and sound to test them to their utmost limit before the signal of peace or war was sounded out to warn the others. On most occasions, the challenger would lose his life for the safety of his people.

He would lay a taki (offering) upon the ground for the visitors to pick up as a token of their coming in peace and the bonds of unity. The last action of the challenging warrior would be to place his Ti aha over his shoulder, slap his thigh to indicate to his people 'we are coming in' and simulate a move as if pulling the visitors Waka in behind him.

