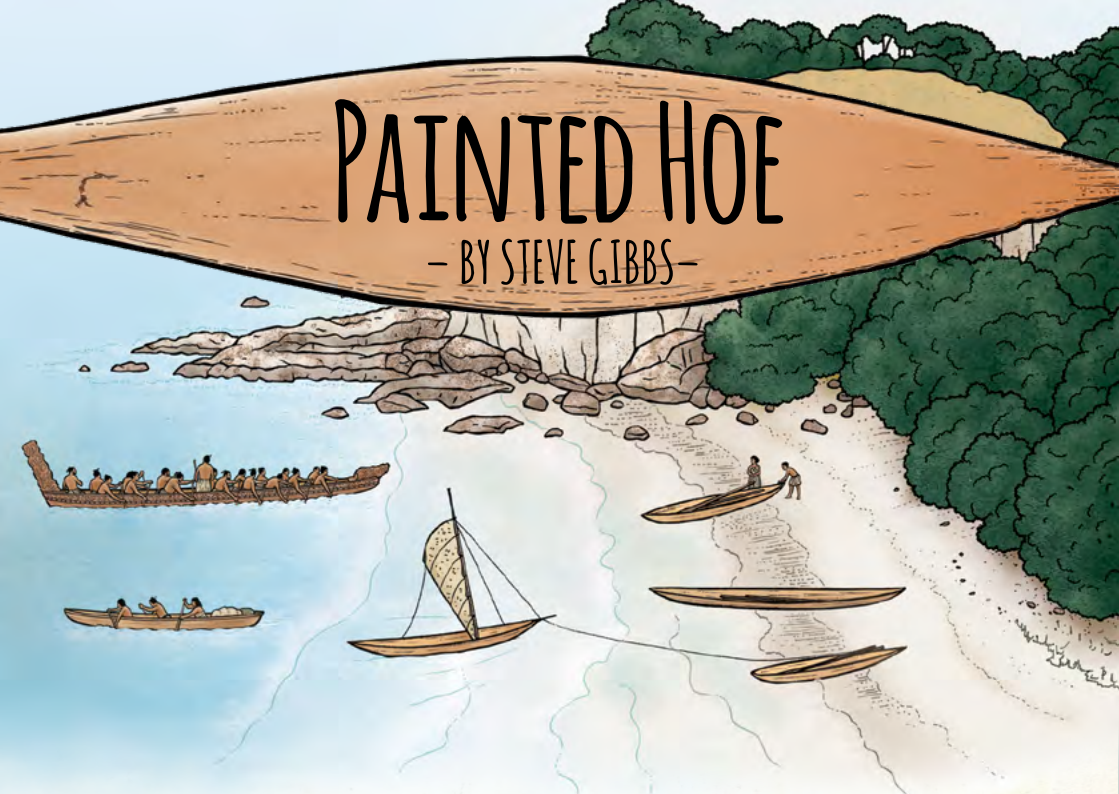


PAINTED HOE

— BY STEVE GIBBS —



In Aotearoa, in the days before Europeans arrived, there were thousands of **waka**. They were the main form of transport. If you'd been here then, you would have seen waka all around our coastline and on our rivers and lakes.

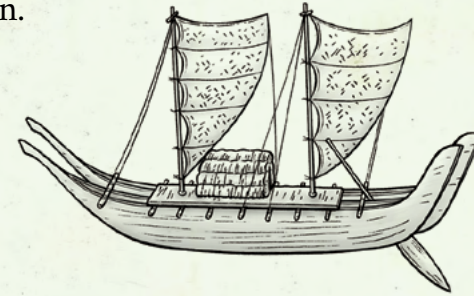
Hoe waka were the paddles that Māori used to move these waka through the water. Hoe waka were highly valued.



Waka

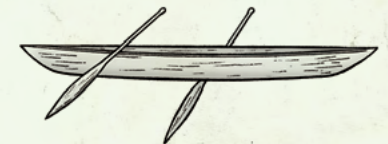
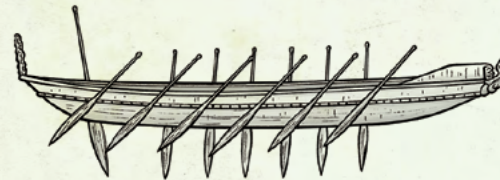
There were several kinds of waka.

Waka hourua were large, seagoing waka that could cross the Pacific Ocean.

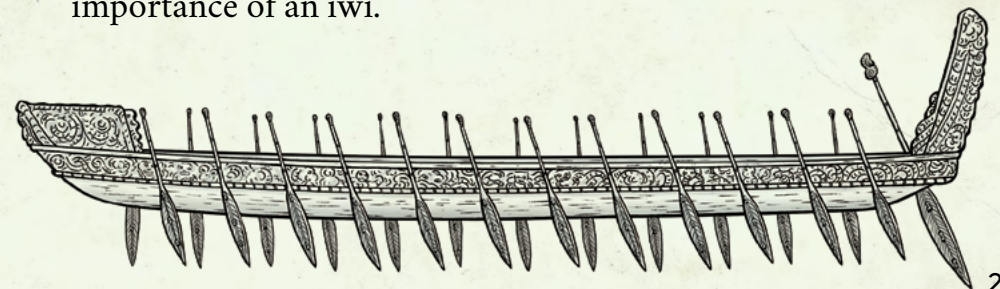


Waka tētē were used for fishing and to carry goods and people.

Waka tiwai were very common waka used for everyday travel. They carried just a few people.



Waka taua could hold up to two hundred people. They were used to carry war parties and to transport large groups of people to ceremonies such as **tangihanga**. Waka taua were also symbols of **mana**. They showed the power and importance of an iwi.

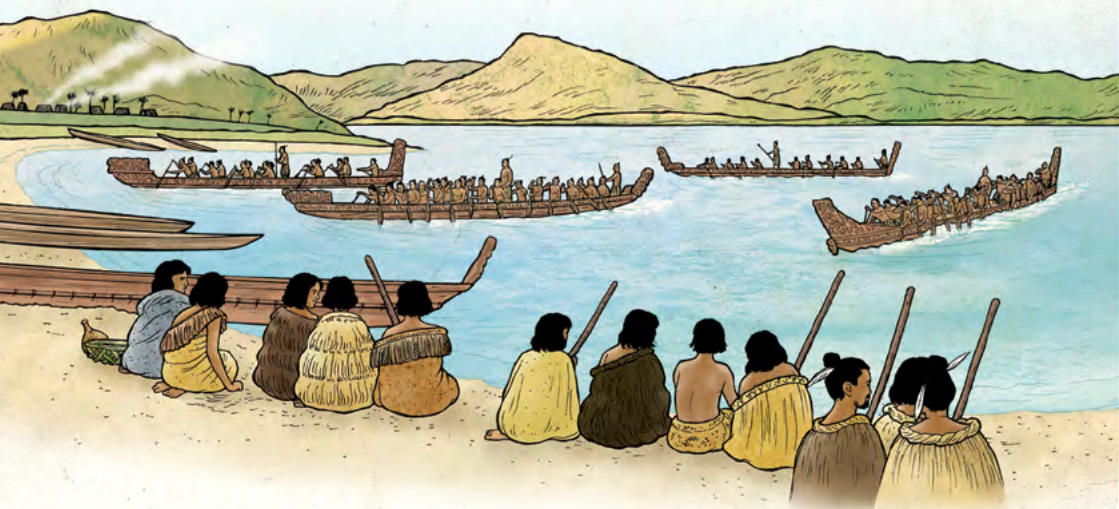


WHY WERE HOE WAKA VALUED?

Hoe waka were valued for a number of reasons.

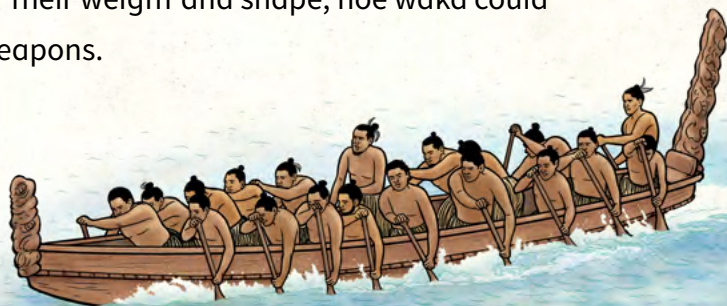
They were important in all areas of life.

Hoe waka were used to paddle waka, and waka had many different uses. They were used for collecting and transporting food such as fish and kūmara. They were also used to bring large numbers of people to important gatherings or to carry warriors to battle.



They were extremely well designed.

Māori could use the hoe to make their waka travel at great speed. Because of their weight and shape, hoe waka could also be used as weapons.



They were works of art.

Most hoe waka were beautifully carved and painted. Many of the designs represented things from the natural environment. Some showed clouds, winds, and currents – all of which were important when travelling across the oceans. Other hoe waka showed plants and animals that were **kaitiaki** or sources of food.

They had spiritual importance.

The whakairo (carving) and waituhi (painting) on hoe waka also included elements of **whakapapa**. This gave the hoe spiritual meaning. The painted designs on these hoe waka are the oldest examples of what we now call **kōwhaiwhai**, the painted patterns that you see in most **wharenui** and Māori churches. These patterns are a visual way of keeping culture and traditions alive.



EXCHANGING HOE WAKA

At 3 p.m. on 12 October 1769, the first peaceful meeting between Māori and Europeans took place. The English explorer Captain James Cook arrived at Whareongaonga, a settlement near Tūranganui-a-Kiwa (Gisborne), on his ship, the *Endeavour*. Tupaia, a navigator and artist from Tahiti, was on board. Tupaia was able to talk with local iwi as his own language was similar to te reo Māori. About fifty Māori came onto the *Endeavour*. They exchanged items for tapa cloth, glass beads, potatoes, and seeds. Among the items exchanged were many painted hoe waka.

Only about twenty of those hoe waka survive. They are possibly even more important now than they were in 1769. Their design, and the way they are carved and painted, tell us a lot about the people who made them. The hoe waka are amazing examples of technology and art. It's easy to see they were made by people with skilled hands and clever minds.

There are just two of the hoe waka in Aotearoa. The rest are in museums and private collections around the world. Perhaps one day soon, they will return home. Then the descendants of the people who made the hoe waka will be able to see the beauty of these **taonga** for themselves.



Glossary

hoe waka: paddles

kaitiaki: guardians

kōwhaiwhai: painted patterns inside wharenuī and churches

mana: prestige, status, authority, power

tangihanga: funerals

taonga: treasures

waka: canoes

whakapapa: information on how ancestors are connected

wharenuī: meeting houses

Painted Hoe

by Steve Gibbs

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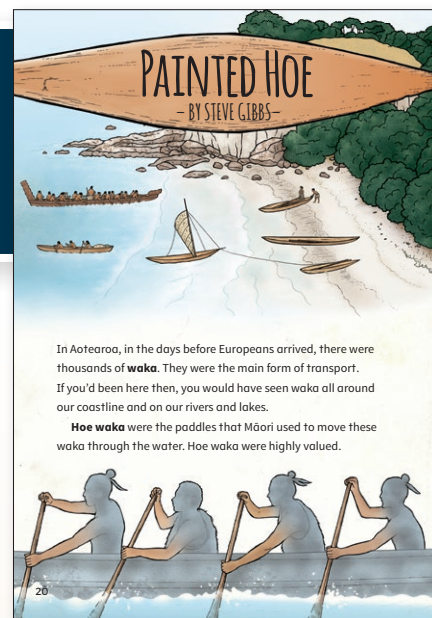
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