

Where did the ancestors of the Maori come from?

Maori mythology tells us that Hawaiki is the traditional homeland of the Polynesian people. There are different opinions about where Hawaiki was. Some say it was Hawaii, others the Cook Islands, Samoa or another place.

Recent archeological research traces the origins of the Polynesians to Melanesia. People from Melanesia spread east through the Pacific Islands into Tonga and Samoa. These people had developed a clear “Polynesian culture” by about 2500 years ago in the western islands of Polynesia. Then around 2000 – 1500 years ago these Polynesians spread into Eastern Polynesia – the Marquesas, Easter Islands and Hawaii.

The people in Eastern Polynesia are physically similar which suggests a small group settled, had children, who then had children and so forth. They are mostly tall, well-built, with light brown skin and have straight or wavy black hair. It is these Polynesians who arrived in New Zealand in about 1300 AD.

Task 1: Answer these questions after reading the above paragraphs.

1. Where do Maori myths tell us where the early Polynesians came from?
2. However, what do archeologists tell us about where the early Polynesians might have first come from?
3. Where did the people of Melanesia spread to?
4. When did the Polynesians spread into Eastern Polynesia?
5. When did the Polynesians arrive in Aotearoa approximately?

Task 2 Mapping

Use the information in the above paragraphs to draw in and label the route you think the ancestors of Maori took ending in New Zealand.