

1880.
NEW ZEALAND.

LEGENDARY HISTORY OF THE MAORIS

(EXTRACTS FROM A COMPILATION OF THE).

Presented to both Houses of the General Assembly by Command of His Excellency.

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1.—MEMORANDUM ON MAORI HISTORY, by JOHN WHITE.

IN collating the oral traditions of the tribes who have descended from the different migrations of the Maori, it is first necessary to have a clear idea of their mythology (or religion), for this will be found to underlie all the rules which guide the acts of their daily life. The status of chiefs and rules of war are equally affected by their dread of the power, tapu, and malignity of their gods. Their modes of dressing, cooking, and eating food are influenced by the same dread of transgressing the tapu of the gods.

To collate a history of such a people, we are forced to take as the starting-point that which oral tradition gives as the origin of the world and man. Thence, following through the various stages of man's existence, giving the customs, usages, rites, and incantations for each, a somewhat clear history of the New Zealanders, as it has been handed down by the priests through successive ages, may be obtained.

In taking this course, it is intended to give the oral traditions consecutively, taking those first which relate to actions most remote, giving, as far as practicable in notes, such of the parallel traditions which other Polynesians have preserved as may appear only relating to the same circumstances as those given in the Maori traditions, thus affording to those who may wish to continue the subject a starting-point for further research.

Obsolete or sacerdotal words will be given with the meaning and use appertaining to them in New Zealand, with any meaning or custom relating to such words when used by tribes of other islands of Polynesia.

As considerable differences exist in the customs of the various tribes, it will be necessary to give the history, rites, customs, and incantations of each migration. It will then be seen that the different canoes which came to these Islands were distinct migrations of the same people, all coming originally from one distant home; who, parted on the Pacific Sea, had rested for a time, some in one group and some in another of the different clusters of islands. These various migrations, or parts of a great migration, had evidently met and become partially amalgamated with people of other branches of a race