

The natural world of the maori

While TVNZ are to be congratulated on the commissioning of this new series tracing the ancestry of the Maori people, it's a pity part of the mammoth effort wasn't put into Te Karere.

With a large budget for what's the equivalent of a maori 'Roots', TVNZ seems content to popularise the native image of the maori people rather than examine where they are at today. That's Te Karere's great strength. What are the concerns of the maori people today and what effect does this have on the pakeha majority.

Obviously Te Karere is not prime-time viewing for the majority of TVNZ viewers who may prefer something a little more comfortable, perhaps a maori follow-up to the Ascent of Man. At least that's how the 'Natural world of the maori' is spoken of in the press release.

The pity about such programmes, is that while much education is being aimed these days to inform about new developments in maoridom, old stereotypes and prejudices die hard. The romantic 'traditional' view of the maori as a native race is one such stereotype that is reinforced by such an historical look at the Maori.

TVNZ says every effort will be made to present the series with the mana it deserves, and indeed the Maori consultancy involved will ensure things are handled properly.

The series is aimed to screen next year. It would be fitting if TVNZ were to increase Te Karere's staff of two journalists in the meantime so that viewers don't think that all the maoris left in New Zealand are trapped in history books.

(Ed)

A New Maori Series

Since Television New Zealand developed and broadcast the maori programme "Koha" in 1980, there has been a steady rise in the number, type and quality of maori programmes on television. Koha and the daily programme, "Titiro Mai", explored modern maori culture, contemporary issues and living maori people. The news programme, "Te Karere", highlights the events of the day.

Television New Zealand now begins production of a major documentary series that looks at the origins and the roots of maori.

The Natural World of the maori will explore the world of Polynesia and New Zealand before the arrival of the pakeha in 1769. The series will trace the evolution and development of modern maori culture and will highlight the extraordinary achievements of the people that came thousands of miles over the open ocean to possess this land and become possessed by it.

Programme 1 — Tawhiti Pamamao

The first programme in the series will look at Polynesia before eastern polynesian people found their way into the Southern Ocean and to Aotearoa. The programme will create a picture of what it was like to live in old Polynesia. It will highlight the things that polynesians kept in one form or another in New Zealand. It will look at polynesian languages, fishing, myths, maraes, polynesian plants and animals, tapa cloths, and set the scene for the replacement of this material by harakeke (flax) in New Zealand. The series will look at some polynesian religious ideas and set them for their development in maori New Zealand.

The first programme in the series will look at the world of polynesian navigation. It will examine the voyaging skills and the astronomical knowledge of polynesians and pose questions about people who may have been the world's greatest sailors. We will look at canoes and consider some of the questions about how those canoes brought the first maoris to our shores.

Programme 2 — Te Ao Kohatu

The first polynesians to arrive in Aotearoa brought with them reminders of home. Their canoe carried at least half a dozen tropical plants, a few dogs and kiore, the rat, but the most important thing they brought from home was their own ingenuity, their traditions and their understanding of nature. The first New Zealanders quickly settled into their new home. They observed, named and began to use the birds, plants and fish they found here. They began to cope with striking changes of season and they began to explore the country

and its resources. Back home they had been fishermen and horticulturalists. In this country they became hunters and gatherers as well. They quickly discovered the muka fibre of flax and developed an extraordinary range of flax products. They looked for and found substitutes for pearl shell and polynesian stones and discovered the hardest stone of all — pounamu, the cultural hinge of South Island maori culture.

Programme 3 — — Te Kakahu O Nga Atua

It is impossible to understand anything about the minds of our tupuna without coming to terms with their myths and the way they used them. This programme will look at the way myths put the world in order, gave man a position and a role, and set up our kinship with the rest of nature. The programme will look at the great myth figures of Maori, Kupe, Toi and others — Tupuna or Atua? We will look at their deeds and explore some of the meanings behind the actions. The programme will look at the complexity and variety of myth and local traditions, and ask questions about what was real and what was not. But in the end it may not really matter because a myth is taken on faith and its significance is not necessarily tied to whether or not a real man walked in the real world. Myths may be the only reality.

Programme 4 — Te Whai Ao

The maori people that Captain Cook met when he sailed 'Endeavour' up the East Coast of the North Island were in fact a lot different from those people who arrived here in the canoes from Polynesia. Most of the traces of the old polynesian culture were gone and Cook saw quite a different group of people and a new living culture. This programme looks at the development of those classical maori qualities that we recognise today. We will look at the way the maori spread throughout the land, the fortifications he built, the wars he fought, the way his fishing and horticultural techniques had changed, the development of the art of carving and one of the great achievements of those people — the development of the techniques for storing fragile kumara tubers. Rua Kumara are a great deal more than pits in the ground. They are carefully constructed humidity-con-