

Kia ora, gday and welcome to the History of Aotearoa New Zealand. Episode 77: Working Up a Sweat. This podcast is supported by our amazing Patrons, such as Miki and Quinn. If you want to support HANZ go to patreon.com/historyaotearoa. Last time, we talked about a variety of Māori sports, in particular the fast paced ball sport, kī-o-rahi. Today we will talk about a couple more ball games that were played as well as some other physical games, such as throwing darts and kites!

Before we get into that though, let's talk about games more broadly in Māori culture. The deity that is commonly associated with taonga tākaro is one that we have seen before, Raukatauri or Hineraukatauri. Last time we spoke of her was in the context of taonga pūoro, musical instruments but she is also the goddess of games and amusement in general, or at least the atua that these aspects of culture are said to have originated from. The entity that games came from changes depending on which iwi you are asking, so like most things, this explanation definitely isn't one size fits all. For example, some stories say they come from the children of Rongo, the atua of cultivated food. Some stories actually roll up both aspects into one and say that Raukatauri is the daughter of Rongo, as games are something that is done during peace time, which is the other major domain of Rongo.

An interesting aspect of how Māori played games was it could be divided up into four main times during the day. There was when kids played together, which was basically all day unless they were old enough to help with daily tasks, another is when families met together by popping round for a cup of tea, then there were large gatherings such as harvest festivals, political meetings, weddings and the hākari that would go with them. Lastly there was the specially arranged competitions where groups would meet up to play a specific game together or a range of games. These weren't hard and fast rules, all of it was rather flexible but these were the main kinda sections of life where people would play games and could really occur at any time of day or night. What this meant was that when Europeans arrived, Māori were rather confused. Māori, more or less, played games whenever they felt like, the only thing stopping them was any daily chores that they had going on. Assuming those were done and they had a bit of spare time, they didn't really see any reason not to head out into the field to throw a ball around or to play a board game in the house at night. Europeans on the other hand gave themselves self imposed restrictions on when certain activities could be performed. The chief among this was not doing any work on Sundays, which again, made Māori rather confused as to them it was just another day.

We will talk more about Māori interaction with Europeans and their sports in another episode but for now let's get back to talking about some specific games. Kītē is a game with two or more people and is played with a kī paua. As you might have gathered from the name, this is a ball made from our native sea snail, paua. The kī was made by taking two paua shells, putting some broken shell inside them and tying the two together which would mean that when the kī paua was moved it would rattle. If paua weren't available, stone filled gourds could be used instead. The game was played with each player standing some distance apart and being blindfolded. Each player then must take a step and shake their kī paua before taking another step and shaking it again. They can stand still if they choose but they must shake the kī every few seconds. You might see where this is going but the object of the game is to find the other player through only using the sound of the rattling and be the one to tag them first, before they do the same to you! Best also mentions that this game goes by the name of tīoreoreo, the hand shaking game.

Another ball game that Māori played was called tapu ae. Like kī-o-rahi, tapu ae was also played on a field, though this field is square, and in fact many of the names for various areas on the field were the same as those in kī-o-rahi, though this does vary from region to region. In another similarity, tapu ae saw a revival in the 20th century, in particular around WWI. The way it's played is with two

teams of 7-10 players and with two kī, one being thrown to each team by the referee at the start of the game. The kī aren't allowed to be kicked or otherwise handled by anything other than the players' hands. The field itself is divided down the middle by a boundary called the kahaaranui. This splits the field into three separate parts, essentially two halves except the area along the centre line is counted as its own area, called Te Ao. This means that there are two kahaaranui boundaries a little to the right and left of the centre of the field. I'll put a diagram up in the shownotes if you're feeling a bit lost. In each side of the field is a motu with three tupu which play a similar role as they do in kī-o-rahi. Each team is split up into two more groups which has a different role or mode of play, essentially split into offense and defence. The kitio is the defence side and has up to three players in their motu, deciding how the tupu are arranged before each set. These players can only stay in the motu with their job being to defend the tupu from being knocked over, which is how the teams score. If the tupu is hit but stays up, even if it is outside the motu, it doesn't count for a point and still considered to be 'alive'. If kitio players get possession of the ball, they will pass it to another group of kitio players who are located in Te Ao in the centre of the field, who in turn will pass it to their taniwha players on the other side of the field. The kī isn't allowed to cross into the kahaaranui without being passed by one of these players in the middle and each team has a couple of players who perform this task. Every other player is on the taniwha side of the team, the attacking side. As you have probably guessed these are the guys that the kitio of the opposing team are trying to stop from scoring as the taniwha try to knock over the tupu with the kī. They are pretty much allowed anywhere on the court, though there are variations of the rules which restrict their movement a bit based on how many players there are. The idea is to keep the game fast paced so sometimes rules might say that players are allowed to run with the kī or can only take one step before they must quickly pass it. Tapu ae is played in sets so whoever wins the most sets out of a given number wins the game.

The use of stilts was quite popular across the country. They are known as pou turu though would have other names depending on who you asked. They were pretty much what you expected, a long piece of wood with some sort of foot rest coming off it, which could either be a natural part of the branch the stilt was made from or made from another piece of wood and lashed onto the main piece. These footrests could be set quite high up on the stilt if the person was particularly adept at using, between 1-1.5m. Stilts were used in all sorts of games such as racing across land, wrestling or even racing to cross bodies of water including rivers and the sea. Apparently stilt walking was prevalent across the Pacific but most Europeans didn't take much notice so there isn't a lot of info from their end regarding it.

As you might have gathered listening to these episodes, a lot of past times that we now see as being very Kiwi have very old origins in Te Ao Māori. So it might not come as too much of a surprise that probably one of the most quintessentially Kiwi summer past times probably has its roots in Te Ao Māori, tobogganing or sledding if you're American. Well, tobogganing in and of itself isn't really a Kiwi thing per se, we see its presence all over the world in various forms but most often it involves sliding down snow, which is something that we don't really get here in Aotearoa. Instead, something we do a lot today is sled down sand dunes, usually on cardboard or something similar and it seems that pre-European Māori were also a big fan of this too! There were of course some differences though, such as that they probably did it down hills with water thrown on them but also the fact that they didn't have access to cardboard for their toboggins. Instead they would get some wood and carve it to specifications, usually about 18cm wide and 80cm in length with a raise front where you could put your feet. Occasionally this raised part would have some extra decorative carving on it with paua shell, especially if the carving depicted a face. To keep the passenger on board, there were a couple of different options. One was to have a cord through the raised part that they could hold

onto, the other was to just have a peg in the front to grip onto. Usually a toboggin was made to hold only one person but some were made that could hold two, which were naturally larger. As you would expect, racing toboggins down hills was a big pastime among children and Best mentions that there was a handicap system for these races, but he doesn't elaborate on what this might have involved. Occasionally things would get more interesting if you had a hill next to a body of water, which was the case in one particular instance. During high tide the kids would slide down the hill and try to get as far as they could by skimming across the water, not too unlike skipping a stone across the surface!

Throwing darts, although at first blush may sound the same as spear throwing, was actually very different. These darts were about a metre in length and made from houama wood or could be made from stalks of flax but either way some harakeke leaf is added to the end which would ensure that they had a blunt knob. This would seem like it was designed to avoid injury but it doesn't really make much sense since spear throwing was already a thing, so why bother adding this safety feature if the more dangerous alternative was already culturally accepted? Well, it had to with how they were thrown. Or rather, bounced. When going to throw the darts, an area that was clear of obstructions would be chosen and a small mound of dirt made up. Participants would stand about 10m behind the mound and take a running start to throw the teka, dart, at the mound. The idea was to bounce the dart by its blunt end off the mound and make it continue flying, rather just tossing it as far as you could. The person who threw/bounced it the furthest, wins.

Manu tukutuku, kites, were quite a large part of pre-European Māori culture. So much so that they were a big part of one of the most important events in the Māori calendar, Matariki or the Māori New Year. We talked a bit about kites in episode 15 when we talked about Matariki so if you want to know more about their use in that context you can go listen to that episode. For now, let's talk about kites more broadly. They came in a variety of shapes, sizes and designs and were used for all sorts of purposes, including entertainment, ceremony or even in battle which I think is rad as hell! Manu tukutuku could also be used as an aid for fishing as well, using them to kinda kitesurf when attached to a waka or to send messages over long distances. They could also be used as boundary markers, indicating where someone's land ended and another's began, though I'm not sure if they used them in the sky I suspect that boundary markers that were less prone to being destroyed by high winds were more popular. As you might expect from such a significant cultural item, kites are found throughout Māori stories and legends, such as Tāwhaki trying to follow Tangotango into the heavens on a kite or Māui who used kites to fly over land. Both of these stories obviously involve people, or entities, use the kite as a means of transport by riding them. Although in reality someone couldn't use a manu tukutuku to fly into the sky or travel long distances, it did have some real world precedent, which we will talk about in a bit. Like many crafts, being able to spot and select the best materials, reciting the appropriate karakia or waiata, the construction and learning to fly a kite and perform various moves were all highly regarded as worthwhile and impressive skills. In fact, people who were quite skilled with flying kites could perform all sorts of moves such as spins, banks and even stall their kites in both light and strong winds. As for their construction, manu tukutuku could be made from all the usual suspects, tī, mānuka, raupō, upoko, toetoe, harakeke, kiekie and nīkau, among others. Toe toe, mānuka, harakeke and raupō were the most popular materials, likely due to a combination of being readily available in many different places as well as their own individual properties in construction. Aute, paper mulberry, was also popular where it was available, you may recall it was mostly restricted to the warmer regions of the upper North Island. Apparently kites made of aute were only flown by men of high rank. Some kite were made just for fun and didn't really have much ceremony or tapu around them but those that were used in various religious circumstances or for divination obviously had quite a lot more protocols to follow during their

construction. When not in use, manu tukutuku, especially the larger ones, were usually housed in a special building called the tāwharau manu tukutuku, which could be pretty big, up to 15m long. Inside the kite would be placed on a platform, likely to maximise the space and probably to keep it dry and off the ground. When the kite was to be flown, it would be brought out the night before and left outside overnight to allow the dew to come on it, making it a bit moist. This was so that when it was used the next day, it wouldn't be super dry and fragile, it would have some flex in to allow it to not snap immediately.

Kites were of course widely enjoyed by kids. Children's kites tended to be smaller and more easily manipulated, often being made of raupō. Manu tukutuku were actually popular throughout the Pacific not just in Aotearoa as well as those used Europe. William Colenso (Yes, THAT William Colenso) notes that the kites Māori used were much different to the ones used by Europeans, as the ones made in Aotearoa tended to be more similar to ones found in China. This would make a bit of sense since Māori, Polynesian and essentially every group of people who can trace their whakapapa to the Pacific are descended from people who came from south east Asia thousands of years ago. Best doesn't really agree with this though, saying that Chinese kites resembled birds more than Māori ones did, with the latter more being a hybrid between birds and humans.

So lets get back to how kites were used in battle, as I am sure that you are wondering what that involved just as I did when I first read that. Within that though we are going to talk about how manu tukutuku were also used for divination, as that was part of how they were used in warfare. In particular, if a taua, a war party, were about to attack a pā they would make a kite from toetoe under heavy tapu. This meant anyone involved in making the kite wasn't allowed to eat during its construction, among other restrictions such as the rope being made of unprocessed harakeke. The idea was that the kite was flown under the guidance of Tumatauenga, the atua of war and was meant to gain his aid in the coming battle. As such, breaking tapu would offend him and possibly bring defeat. The construction and flight of the manu tukutuku would be directed by a tohunga, with them flying it themselves with their right hand. If they forgot to do this and otherwise used the left hand, that would be a tohu that they would lose the battle. This was also the case if the kite flew a bit lopsided. In contrast, if the kite flew upright and straight it was taken as a sign that they would see victory. During the flight the tohunga would recite some karakia as well and once this was complete, the people who had made the kite, who had been fasting at this point, were now able to eat. This was usually the point where anyone else present would leave the tohunga to do their thing as they could do the rest themselves. They would make a ring of toetoe leaves and put it onto the line, the wind sending it up towards the manu tukutuku. This was a karere, a messenger, though Best doesn't say what the message was or it was intended for it was likely something asking for Tu's favour. This was a fairly common practice when using manu tukutuku for divination, occasionally using multiple harakeke rings instead. The ring could also be made of wood and have feathers on them too. Once the karere had reached the kite, the whole thing would be released over the pā they were about to attack. The flax rope would trail underneath and would be long enough that it would be basically touching the ground, which was especially a problem when it flew over the pā as everyone desperately tried to avoid touching it. It was believed that touching the harakeke would instil the power of the enemy tohunga into that person, which kinda sounds like a good thing but that tohunga was gonna try and kill you in about 20mins so you probably didn't want them to have any influence over you. Additionally, touching the rope would mean that those in the pā would surely be defeated. Often for those inside a pā, the first sign that there was an incoming assault was a kite would fly over them, trying to touch anyone inside its walls. The other way that manu tukutuku were used in warfare was to get water and food to besieged allies, allowing the kite to carry the supplies into a pā to help them survive longer until a relief force arrived. There are also

reports of people using the kites to lift themselves off the ground and enter a fortified pā, or alternatively to escape one that was under siege. Kites were used for a bit of deception too, with one story telling how some kites were built and moved to resemble seagulls, tricking their enemy into thinking they were currently lots of fish in an area of sea. They then left the pā to go catch some fish but fell into the trap that the kite makers had set.

There are many different types of manu tukutuku usually named manu and then whatever the kite is depicting or meant to represent. Such as the manu wheke which long flowing tentacles like an octopus or the manu tangata which looked like a person. Some were even given the names of tīpuna if they were particularly important. We won't talk about all the different kinds as there are quite a few and Best goes into fairly deep detail on each one but here are few that caught my eye. Manu paitiiti were made in the shape of flounder and were apparently not too difficult to make but Best notes that the proper 'charm' was needed to ensure that they flew well. This wasn't uncommon when making kites as karakia would sometimes be said when they were flown to stop them from getting tangled with other kites or to ensure that they descended gracefully and didn't crash. Manu kākā were designed to look like the kākā bird. They had a frame of mānuka stalks which had toetoe flowers attached. The kite was then covered in the orangey reddy feathers of the actual kākā to complete the effect. Manu rere were more generally bird shaped kites that represented birds as a food source so they were held in high regard by those more inland hapū that relied heavily on them for sustenance. The kite would have a central body with two outstretched wings and some sort of tassles coming out the back that would flutter around, presumably representing a tail. These kites were fast and able to dart around and maneuvered quickly, if the person was skilled enough. They would often be used to lure birds into traps or as competition between people to see who could imitate bird movements the best, so the whole idea of these kites was really to have the best replica bird. Manu tangata were among the largest kites with a potential wingspan of 10-20m, meaning that they could require multiple people to operate. Or more likely they needed a few people to keep the thing from flying off if only one person had the cord! They did have enough lift to pull a person or even multiple people off the ground so it was possible! Some could even have wings that flapped as well. Interestingly, manu tangata possibly had a far reaching influence into the future. Richard Pearse, the Kiwi who may have invented powered flight before the Wright Brothers, allegedly based his plane design on that of the manu tangata

As you should be aware by now, kite flying for fun, sport, ritual, warfare and basically every other reason reduced significantly after European arrival. Much like other sports and aspects of Māir life manu tukutuku were also victims of missionary conversions and subsequent disdain, among other forms of colonisation. However, there has been a more concerted effort since the 1980s to bring them back into more widespread use, which only seems to be gaining more and more traction as Matariki also increases in popularity as a holiday, particularly with it becoming a national public holiday in 2022.

Next time, we will be moving away from physical, body intensive games to ones that are more brain intensive, often involving speech and memory as key components.

If you want to send me feedback, ask a question, suggest a topic or just have a chinwag you can find my email and social media on historyaotearoa.com. You can also find helpful resources there like transcripts, sources and translations for some of the Te Reo Māori we have used. You can help support HANZ through Patreon, buying merch or giving us a review, it means a lot and helps spread the story of Aotearoa New Zealand. As always, haere tū atu, hoki tū mai. See you next time!