

Life Without Arthritis

The Maori Way

Jan de Vries



Mainstream Publishing *eBooks*



About the Book

To people in the West the name 'Maori' conjures up images of a tribal society. Not quite so widely known, however, is the fact that this race tends to live to a great age – by and large unhampered by ill health or the traditional diseases now accepted by us as being an unavoidable consequence of growing old. For even among the Maori elders there is usually no sign of rheumatism or arthritis. Indeed, there is little evidence to suggest that these conditions have ever existed in their culture.

In *Life Without Arthritis* Jan de Vries shows how the dietary management of the Maori people is the major source of continued good health – and that is a diet now widely available in Western society. He shares the treasures of the Maoris and explains how, by following their example, there *can* be life without arthritis or rheumatism.

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LIFE WITHOUT ARTHRITIS

The Maori Way

A REMARKABLE DISCOVERY FOR ARTHRITIS AND
RHEUMATISM SUFFERERS

Jan de Vries



EDINBURGH AND LONDON

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Epub ISBN: 9781780570396

Version 1.0

www.mainstreampublishing.com

This edition 2004

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First published in Great Britain in 1991 by
MAINSTREAM PUBLISHING COMPANY (EDINBURGH) LTD
7 Albany Street
Edinburgh EH1 3UG

Reprinted 1995, 1999, 2001

ISBN 1 84018 966 5

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A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

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Honoe te pito ora ki te pito pate.

(Let the strong end be joined by the weak end)

- Maori proverb

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The Maoris

ON 1 APRIL 1970 we opened our residential clinic on the west coast of Scotland, called Mokoia. It was housed in a beautiful mansion overlooking the Clyde and the Isle of Arran, beyond which the Irish Sea could be seen. I doubt if anybody could express in words the beauty and full glory of a sunset viewed from Mokoia and do it justice.

When I opened the clinic in Scotland, I was ignorant of the meaning of the name. I asked around and checked with libraries, but I didn't really know where to start. What did the name 'Mokoia' mean? From various sources I was given different interpretations. The explanation I liked the best originated in New Zealand and related to an island in the New Zealand lake district which, according to Maori legend, was often referred to as 'the Island of Love'.

The legend comes to us from the unwritten records of a highly cultured people. The island of Mokoia is surrounded by a lake in Rotorua, an area that is famous for its thermal lakes and is steeped in legend, history and culture. Rotorua is a land of romance. Every hill and valley, every geyser and boiling mud pool, every lake and island and indentation of the shore was known by name and loved by the Maori people. Many of these places were immortalised in fable and story, and this is not surprising. A region of violent thermal activity is an obvious setting for tales of mystery and magic, many of which have been handed down from the distant past.

'I kapi i be cangata,' the Maoris used to say of the island of Mokoia, which means 'covered with men'. It is only a small island, about one mile square, rising in proud isolation 500 feet above the level of the lake and protected by its waters. It has a history that can be traced back more than a thousand years. The island of Mokoia was originally inhabited by an indigenous tribe who were conquered by the Arawa people. *Te arawa* means 'the canoe'. About six centuries ago, some of the more adventurous people from Tahiti set out on exploratory journeys: in a fleet of canoes they sailed southwards, where they eventually settled at Maketu in the Bay of Plenty. From there the Arawa people spread inland and eventually conquered the indigenous tribes of the Hot Lakes district – the guardians of the fascinating thermal region of New Zealand. It is in this area that the island of Mokoia is to be found.

In their legends we read about Ngatoro – 'the fire-bringer'. It is claimed that upon finding dry valleys he stamped his foot so hard that springs of water gushed forth. It was Ngatoro who first visited the mountains and placed on them the mysterious white-skinned fairy people; legend also had it that it was Ngatoro who was the cause of volcanic fire, spouting geysers and boiling mud pools.

The early name of Mokoia was *Te Mokotapu-a-Tinirau*, meaning 'the Sacred Isle of Tinirau'. Its later name, Mokoia, is a curious example of a native pun. Many years went by before the original inhabitants were finally exterminated or absorbed by the Arawa tribe. One of these aboriginals was Arorangi, a tribal chief, who had killed and eaten a dog belonging to an Arawa chief. As a result, a battle was fought and Arorangi was killed by the Arawa chief. He was struck over the eye with the sharp point of a *ko*, which is a digging implement. The wound was made where his face was closely tattooed. When news of this spread, it was referred to as the battle of Mokoia, which means tattooed, and is also a play on the words *moko* (tattooed) and *ko* (digging

implement). The name of the battle was afterwards transferred to the island.

One of the many things for which the island was noted was the kumara god to be found there. The *kumara* is a type of sweet potato which formed part of the Maoris' staple diet. The kumara god was portrayed on a stone emblem and venerated as the god of fertility. It stood about four feet high and was brought over to Mokoia by an Arawa canoe. For many years the stone emblem was kept in a tiny wooden building, which could almost be described as a miniature temple. In the planting season the tribes of the district would make a pilgrimage to Mokoia, carrying seed-kumara. They would touch the sacred effigy with the seed to ensure the fertility of their crop. In the warm, volcanic soil the god protected the plantations against blight and frost. '*Kia tu tangatanga te aro ki Mokoia*' ('Let the way be open to Mokoia') was a local saying which recognised the power of the kumara god.

In the year 1823 the islanders suffered severe losses against a northern tribe led by the redoubtable chief Hongi Hika. At this time Hongi was the most feared man in New Zealand. Three years earlier he had set sail for Britain, where King George IV granted him an audience and presented him with a suit of armour, among other gifts. At Sydney, on his way back to New Zealand, he exchanged many of these presents for muskets and ammunition, and on his arrival at the Bay of Islands he lost no time in achieving his ambition – becoming overlord of all the tribes. The local tribes were helpless against warriors who were armed with the weapons of the white man, and Hongi's raids became a bloody procession of victories. It was in the early part of 1823 that Hongi set out with a flotilla of canoes and an army of bloodthirsty fighting men to subdue the Arawa.

The people of Rotorua, aware that Hongi would have to march overland to reach their settlement, considered

themselves impregnable in the fortress of Mokoia, with the vast moat of the lake as their protection. But Hongi was better armed and more cunning than his opponents. His canoes were paddled up the river and then hauled overland, from where he reached the lake. Early one morning, while the mists still lay heavy on the lake, the Arawa tribe slept peacefully. The sentries were on watch, but could see nothing through the mist. Suddenly, the Arawa people were alerted as the gulls screamed overhead and they rushed to defend the beaches. Ever since that ill-fated morning, the watchful gulls of Mokoia have been held in reverence by the Arawa tribe, who will allow no one, Maori or white man, to molest the sacred birds, in whose bodies, they say, still live the spirits of warriors who died in battle.

Hongi was cunning and for three days his canoes encircled the island. A few of the Arawa people managed to escape by swimming to the mainland by night. Then came the time that Hongi's men opened fire and made their bridgehead on the northern shore, from where their guns were used to mow down the opposition. From that point they soon gained possession of the whole island, although many lives were lost on both sides. Eventually, a truce was negotiated between Hongi and the Arawa chief and Hongi returned home, taking many prisoners with him.

With some knowledge of the history of the island of Mokoia you may be able to appreciate the fantastic legends of its people so much better. One of their best-known and best-loved legends is the love story of Hinemoa.

The young chief Tutanekai lived with his parents on the island. On a tribal visit to the lakeside village of Owhata, Tutanekai saw and promptly fell in love with the beautiful young chieftainess of Owhata. Young women of Hinemoa's status were closely guarded and Tutanekai had no opportunity of telling her of his love when it was time for him to return to the island of Mokoia.