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978-1-108-03989-5 - Traditions and Superstitions of the New Zealanders

Edward Shortland

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### **Traditions and Superstitions of the New Zealanders**

This historical and anthropological account of the Maori of New Zealand was published in 1854 by the English physician and colonial administrator Edward Shortland (1812–93). Shortland was deeply interested in Maori culture, learned the language, and wrote ethnographic studies including *The Southern Districts of New Zealand* (1851) and *Maori Religion and Mythology* (1882), also included in this series. In various roles including 'Protector of Aborigines', he often served as interpreter, and played an active role in mediating not only between Europeans and Maori, but between different Maori factions. Unlike many of his contemporaries, Shortland's approach was to interact with the Maori rather than merely observe them. In this book, Shortland often cites named Maori individuals as his sources, which makes his treatment of topics such as *tapu*, land tenure and rites of passage distinctive. He also covers Maori cosmology and origin narratives, genealogies, education, proverbs, songs and spells.

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TRADITIONS AND SUPERSTITIONS

OF THE

NEW ZEALANDERS;

WITH

ILLUSTRATIONS OF THEIR MANNERS AND  
CUSTOMS.

BY

EDWARD SHORTLAND, M.A., CANTAB.,

EXTRA-LICENTATE OF THE ROYAL COLLEGE OF PHYSICIANS;

AUTHOR OF

"THE SOUTHERN DISTRICTS OF NEW ZEALAND."

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## P R E F A C E.

BUT little is generally known of the superstitious practices of the New Zealanders. The Missionaries, who, from their knowledge of the language, alone had it in their power for many years to converse freely with the native race, seem to have avoided all inquiries on such subjects. They came to teach a religion, and not to learn the principles of superstitions which, however valuable in reference to matters of ethnological interest, they regarded as having for their author the great enemy of mankind.

Similar views have probably influenced Missionaries in all new countries; for precisely the same course was taken by the

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early Spanish Missionaries at the Philippine Islands, who, we are told,\* did their utmost “to extirpate the original memorials of the natives, substituting religious compositions of their own, in the hope of supplanting the remains of national and pagan antiquity.”

Several years' residence in New Zealand, passed for the most part in constant intercourse with its native inhabitants, either while travelling or while stationed at Marketu—a large village on the shore of the Bay of Plenty, where the influence of the Missionaries had made little or no impression—gave the writer of the following pages opportunities of studying the manners of the Aborigines, such as they were before they became modified by intercourse with Europeans.

The first seven chapters give the result of the author's personal observations and inquiries touching the traditions and superstitions

\* Pritchard's Physical History of Man, vol. v. p. 67.

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of the New Zealanders. The succeeding chapters are chiefly devoted to the consideration of points of the social condition and manners of this people, which could be learned only by residing among them on terms of intimacy.

1, CRESCENT PLACE, PLYMOUTH,  
*October, 1854.*

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