

Except among a few, the marriage contract is performed without any ceremony, and often dissolved in the same way. The property of the wife does not merge in that of the husband; she still retains her right to dispose of it independently after marriage, or transmit it to her children. Even though she marries into another hapu, or even another tribe, her children are entitled to and receive a certain share of the common property in land, especially that portion which may have been her own peculiar holding. The members of each hapu live together in the same village, and although every family has a separate dwelling-house, there is almost invariably one large one, common to all, used as a meeting and sleeping-place for any who wish. The meals are usually three per diem. Where the hapu is a small one, they are cooked and partaken of in common, the sexes eating apart; where large, groups of families combine in the same way. Having no amusements at their *kaingas* (the *halkas* are only for certain occasions), and the work of cultivating and shooting pigeons only occupying a comparatively small portion of their time, their lives are very monotonous, and, being a people fond of excitement, they are peculiarly open to new ideas, adopt them eagerly, and throw them aside as quickly. In this way, wars, creeds, schools, implementations of husbandry, committees, blue ribbon ideas, anything new is quickly taken up, hotly followed for a short time, and then dropped. Even the excitement of a small lawsuit is followed eagerly by all, the loser almost invariably seeming to feel as happy as the winner, provided he is conscious of having had fair play and a patient hearing.

The dead are kept unburied for from three to seven days, according to the rank of the deceased, during which time scenes of alternate feasting and weeping take place, the whole stock of food of the hapu for the year being consumed at some of these *tangis*.

The Natives have no real social or class distinctions, every man, from the chief down, performing his share of work.

Planting is the one great occupation. In some hapus it is done in common, in others each family has its own cultivation. The crops grown are potatoes, maize, oats, wheat, pumpkins, melons, very little cabbage or kitchen vegetables. The potato is the staple crop, but of this only enough for their own consumption is grown, very often not even sufficient for that. In spite of the fact that all produce would realise good prices, much higher than those which are obtained on the coast, it is almost impossible to purchase any. Very little oats, wheat, and maize are grown, and these only at Tokaanu. The soil in other places is poor and unproductive, and in many cases impoverished by constant cropping.

To the staple food (the potato) is sometimes added fish from the lake, the *kokopu*, which is sometimes caught in large quantities and dried, some meat occasionally, principally pork, more rarely mutton and beef. As a rule, they live in harmony with each other, comparatively few quarrels taking place, especially among members of the same hapu. The evenings are spent in the *wharepuni*, or large meeting-house, when there is one, talking over passing events, or perhaps relating some tradition of the tribe, by which and their constant repetition, every member of the tribe is perfectly acquainted with its history.

The principal stars visible in the southern hemisphere are known to them by name; also, the two great planets, Venus and Jupiter. Each month is marked by the rising of a certain star before sunrise, and they have a name for every separate day of the moon's age.

The political state is like the social, in a state of transition. Any matter in which the whole tribe is concerned is decided at a general meeting, and acted on accordingly—similarly with the hapu affairs—the chief convenes a meeting and acts as the majority have decided. The chief has no authority to punish offences, or levy fines, or enforce the restitution of stolen property, in matters of this kind, where they are averse to have recourse to the European Law Courts. A Committee may be assembled and inflict a fine which may be paid or not; in some places the law of *muru* prevails, but I have not heard of any instance of it for some years. There is no recognised tribunal among themselves to which they can appeal; in many instances, the chief, who by birth and character may possess influence, can do a good deal to repress offences, but these instances are rare and becoming more so.

At one time Committees were formed in the district, by which many matters were decided, but as they had no means of enforcing their decisions, and as these decisions were often most outrageous and unreasonable, they gradually lost any authority they might have possessed, and the litigants had recourse to the regular European Court, where they were they in a position to do so.

“The Native Committees Act, 1883,” does not affect this district, as it is included in the Tauranga District, and the Committee, elected at Tauranga from among the natives residing there, is too far away to be of any use to those in this district.

They take very little interest in political matters, only as they affect the lands; and the election of a Native Member of the House of Representatives causes no excitement.

There are two Native Assessors in the district, but they live each too far away to be always present on Court days. Whenever they have sat with me, I have found them sensible and straight-forward men, able to take a common-sense view of, and give a fair decision on any matter in dispute; but, as a rule, the Natives themselves prefer to have their disputes decided by the European Magistrate.

The Natives appear physically strong; the men and women being, for the most part, robust in appearance, active and well-built, and have all the outward signs of a healthy and prolific people; yet, in this district, at least, there can be no question of their rapid decrease in numbers. Every hapu, every village, has now considerably fewer inhabitants, than it had fifteen, ten, or even five years ago. This is not the case in any separate part of the district, it is the same throughout. To what cause or combination of causes the decrease may be attributed is very difficult to decide; it may be that the general tendency to consumptive complaints, induced by their mode of life, may tend to this in a measure, as well as the insufficiency of healthy and nourishing food and comfortable clothing; but I think these are not the sole causes. A great many more than was thought at the time perished in the Waikato war and in those which followed. The proportion of adults to children in the last census taken here was very marked. Families are small, two or three children being about the average, except in a few cases. I think the cause lies deeper, as the women, when married to Europeans, have generally large families.

A kind of leprous disease, called *ngeri ngeri* is, I believe, peculiar to Taupo, and only there about