Maori 1500 AD - 1700 AD

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This army list is designed to for use with the De Bellis Renationis (DBR) wargame rules. It is an alternate, and therefore a replacement list, for the official list published as DBR Army List III/22.

European contact with the Maori occurred in 1642 with Abel Tasman’s “discovery” of New Zealand. It is interesting to postulate the impact of expanded contact with the Dutch, or even other expanding European colonial powers such as the Portuguese, both of whom were active in Asia and Pacific in the period to 1700. Alternately this list is very suitable for the Maori inter-tribal warfare.

**Maori 1500 AD to 1700 AD:**

Tropical if the far north, otherwise Cold. Ag 0. If Coastal: WW, Rv, H(S), H(G), Wd, RGo, M, BUA. If Inland: WW, Rv, H(S), H(G), Wd, RGo, M, BUA. Max N400

- CinC – Bd(F) @ 25 AP
- Allied-General – Bd(F) @ 15 AP
- Upgrade Allied-Generals to Sub-Generals @ 25 AP
- Warriors – All Bd(F) @ 5 AP
- Fake warriors – Hd(O) @ 1 AP
- Maori scouts – Sk(I) @ 2 AP
- Palisade - FO @ 2 AP

**Only if a coastal tribe:**

- Small waka hunua or waka tete – Bts(O) @ 2 AP [Bd(F), Sk(I)]
- Waka hanua or waka taua – Bts(S) @ 3 AP [Bd(F), Sk(I)]

**Only if an Inland tribe:**

- Small waka tete – Bts(O) @ 2 AP [Bd(F), Sk(I)]
- Upgrade waka tete to waka taua - Bts(S) @ 2 AP [Bd(F), Sk(I)]

**Any:**

- Replace waka with mokihi - Bts(I) @ 1 AP [Bd(F), Sk(I)]

The climatic conditions of New Zealand vary considerably depending on location. The far north tends to be almost tropical with frequent short periods of rain. In contrast the central and southern areas are clearly cold. Rating the far north as warm reduces the chance of rain. Therefore I have opted for the tropical in the far north and cold in the central North Island and South Island. The list is further divided into coastal tribes and inland tribes. Inland tribes can still have a WW but this represents a large lake. Areas of marsh can also be used to represent deep raupo swamps. The low aggression represents the fact the Maori confined their campaigns to New Zealand. It should not be confused with a peaceful country.
Maori armies or taua (raiding parties) are likely to have been relatively small due to the limitations of gathering and supplying large forces until the introduction of the potato with its increased crop size and storage characteristics. Armies of 300 points, or less, are ideal for the period to 1700 AD when much of the fighting was between hapu of the same iwi. The low number of compulsory troops is designed to allow smaller taua to be formed. In fact these very small Maori taua can also be modelled by using 100 point armies and normal scale. These would have only one general and be organised into a single command. Ally generals are used for larger taua comprise warriors from independent hapu or iwi sometimes with leaders with conflicting agendas.

I have retained the rating of Bd(F) as per the original DBR list for Maori. There is an argument that Maori would be better represented as warband. However, I feel such a rating encourages the use of deeper formations by providing a rear support factor. One argument for rating Maori as warband is that warband are more at risk to cavalry. In fact, assuming that warband are deployed two deep Bd(F) are at greater risk of counter attack by mounted compared due to their “fast” rating. Adding Wb(S) to an otherwise Wb(O) group increases the resiliency of warband further. Ratings aside however, I do strongly believe Bd(F) should cost 6 points as per Kiwi or IWF Point values. They have a cost of 5 AP here only to avoid confusion with the published lists.

In this period Maori toa are armed with with rakau Maori (traditional Maori weapons). With no significant European contact until after 1700 Maori cannot use firearms. Maori frequently used ambushes and the hunuhunu or manu-kawhaki which combined a feint retreat with an ambush. Other ruses were also used to gain advantage. Examples include the use of women dressed and armed as warriors to represent additional reinforcements. Players using fake warriors must replace the warriors with elements of hordes if the enemy comes with 200 paces or if shot at.

During the pre-contact period Maori villages could be unfortified, partly fortified or completely fortified by a pa comprising palisades and trench obstacles. Until the introduction of the musket the pa was a significant defensive position and was a frequent focus of the New Zealand battlefield. As such a fortified BUA should frequently feature and be enclosed by additional fixed obstacles (FO) than those listed above. The use of FO by the attacker, as defined in the list above, represents the attacker’s siege works. The introduction of the musket in the early 19th century quickly made the traditional pa and it's palisades obsolete. Don't therefore be surprised that a European army with muskets and cannon can quickly overcome your pa!

Maori waka are divided for simplicity into smaller waka tete, and larger waka taua. When lashed together they become double hulled waka hunua and have a sail. Large fleets of waka could assemble to transport entire taua along the coast. The above allows a substantial taua to be transported by sea, perhaps some 1200 men. Maori waka were not armed with cannon and are therefore unable to conduct distance combat. Inland tribes have fewer waka and these primarially for use on lakes. Wide and deep rivers as well as lakes could be crossed by the construction of mokihi (temporary rafts) constructed from flax and raupo stalks. These were also occasionally used to aid in an attack on a pa located in a lake. They cannot be used at sea. Large waka taua frequently travelled up river or were dragged over rugged terrain to attack such pa. However, an attacker is encouraged to determine if the enemy is likely to have a lake pa first or the points invested in his waka may be wasted.

Bibliography:


Knight, Ian, Maori Fortifications, Oxford: Osprey, 2009.

