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John White

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### **The Ancient History of the Maori, His Mythology and Traditions**

First published between 1887 and 1890, this six-volume work, containing Maori texts with English translations and commentary, and engraved illustrations, was one of the first printed records of the oral traditions of the Maori. The project was commissioned by the New Zealand government in 1879 when it was observed that, due to the introduction of European culture and education, indigenous traditions were in danger of dying out. The material was collected by John White (1826–91), an ethnographer, public servant and writer who had arrived in New Zealand as a boy and first began documenting Maori poetry in the 1840s. Volume 1, published in 1887, includes narratives about the Horouta canoe, the first Maori gods and the creation of humans. The preface explains that although by this time many Maori had become Christians, certain passages in the myths were still deemed too sacred (*tapu*) to be revealed to outsiders.

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# The Ancient History of the Maori, His Mythology and Traditions

VOLUME 1:  
HORO-UTA OR TAKI-TUMU MIGRATION

JOHN WHITE



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Frontispiece.



ANCIENT TATTOOING, MOKO-KURI.

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THE  
ANCIENT HISTORY OF THE MAORI,  
HIS  
MYTHOLOGY AND TRADITIONS.

HORO-UTA OR TAKI-TUMU MIGRATION.

BY  
JOHN WHITE.

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VOLUME I.

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I thought, my child, I had severed the hold of night over us  
When at thy birth the fruitful winds of years of plenty blew,  
And met in crowds, and heralded the coming Pleiades,  
And banished famine, hunger, want, and need from man.  
Then man was guided to the island Wai-ro-ta ;  
The star Pu-anga led him to Raro-tonga,  
Where he built the house Maru-ao-nui,  
And, guided by Te Whaka-ha, he went to Hawa-i-ki,  
And built the house called Rangi-aio,  
And placed the twins of Tai-nga-hue [sun and moon]  
Far in the sky, as signs for ever in the heavens.

*Ancient Maori lament of Tu-rau-kawa for his murdered child.*



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## PREFACE.

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SOME explanation of the disjointed nature of the contents of this work is, no doubt, due to the reader.

The histories of other peoples are based upon monuments, inscriptions in wood or stone, or upon other records: the Maori had not reached this state of advancement, and, though he valued knowledge in the very highest degree, it was entirely preserved in memory and transmitted orally.

He had for ages held tenaciously to the mode of life imposed upon him by the laws and customs of his mythology, and he held his sacred knowledge in such awe that to divulge it to those not of his own race, or even to the junior branches of his own people, was to incur the penalty of death. So thoroughly was he imbued with the principles of his early teaching that, even after he had been taught and had adopted the tenets of the Christian faith, his priests would not dare to disclose some of their secrets.

When reciting the history of the Taki-tumu, a priest gave certain portions, and left other parts untold; and when asked to fill up the omission he replied, "The parts I have not related are so sacred that I withhold them in dread of sudden death." Nor could any logic or persuasion rid him of that fear, or prompt him to give the information.

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## PREFACE.

In the history of Te-Arawa, the priest acted in a similar manner, and excused himself by saying, "I cannot give some of our sacred history, as not an old priest now remains alive who has the power to perform the ceremonies to save me from the penalty of divulging the sacred words of the gods."

When the young chief who wrote the history of Tai-nui from the dictation of an old priest asked that the whole of it should be related to him, he was answered, "Since the Whare-kura, in which our learned priests taught our history, have been neglected, no house is sacred enough for the whole of our history to be recited therein, and I am not able to defend myself from the consequences which would most certainly follow if I were to teach you the whole of our sacred history."

The Mamari priests refused to give all their sacred history for the same reason, and added, "Our gods are not annihilated—they are only silenced by the superior influence of the European God. We are still in the power of our Maori gods, and if we divulge the sacred lore of our ancestors the gods will punish us with death."

Therefore, to give the most perfect history of the Maori people possible under such circumstances, it was deemed best to compile it as herein given, and, further, as the priests of different families of the same migration give different readings of the same parts of their history, to give all these, so that they may explain each other.

Such chiefs as Matiaha-Tira-morehu, of the South Island; Reihana-Waha-nui, of Wai-kato; Wiremu Maihi-Te-Rangi-ka-heke, of Roto-rua; and Aperahama-Tao-nui, of Nga-puhi; men of supreme

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rank, who under the old *régime* would have held first rank in Whare-kura, whose minds have been thoroughly transformed by the truths of Christianity, would have given the whole Maori history consecutively from the creation, with the mythology, migrations, wars, customs, superstitions, rites, and ceremonies; but, unfortunately for us, these men were born too late—that is, their education began after the Whare-kura and its rites had been neglected.

The poem, song, or chant placed at the head of each chapter (translation of which is given in the English part) is the expression of the feelings of joy or sorrow of its composer; who also set the tune or chant to which it should be sung (*d*). The Maori poet never sang of an imaginary joy or sorrow.

Over each fragment in this volume is placed the name of the tribe (*hapu*) from which it was obtained; and it will be observed that these are the names of the principal tribes (*iwi*) representing the various migrations at the present day.

The Maori version is given as written by, or from the dictation of, the priests. In a few places their language is more forcible than elegant: the Maori scholar will observe that the translation of such passages, if not quite literal, includes the sentiments of the composers; and where a sacerdotal or obsolete word or idiom occurs, a synonym follows in a parenthesis.

The priests speak of the gods as moved by human passions, and as acting and speaking like men. Their accounts of creation, of the gods, and of the chronological order of parts of their

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mythology, and of the creation of the world, and of man and woman, vary considerably; so also do the names of several of the gods, and of priests, and of battles; in many instances even the sexes of the gods, and priests, and heroes do not agree; neither do the navigators always agree as to the canoes, or the localities of some of the ancient battles, or the heroes who took part in them.

When a name differs in form or orthography, or where it bears more than one meaning, these are respectively given, with explanations of various other matters on which the priests differ, in the dictionary to be appended to the complete work, as indicated by the letter (*d*) in the several volumes: these explanations, it is hoped, will aid, not only the young Maori scholar, but also the ethnological investigator in his researches respecting the various tribes who occupy the islands of the South Pacific.

Genealogical charts of the various migrations will be given in a separate volume, and it will be seen that the work has been compiled in the order in which it now stands in accordance with them.

I would record my obligations and thanks for matter received from the late Rev. C. Creed, the late Rev. R. Taylor, and the late Rev. J. F. H. Wohlers.

With great pleasure and gratitude I also record here the names of those priests who have given the histories of the respective migrations, namely:—

Nepia-Po-huhu, .Wairua, Paratene-oka-whare, Apiata, Rihari Tohi, Karauria-Nga-whare, Waka-

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Tahu-ahi, Paora-Te-kiri, Ihaka-Nga-hiwi, Harawira-Ta-tere, and John Jury-Te-whata-horo, of the Taki-tumu ;

Wi Maihi-Te-rangi-ka-heke, Tohi-te-uru-rangi, Haupapa, Wiremu-Hika-iro, and Te-ao-o-te-rangi, of the Arawa ;

Kiwi-hua-tahi, Wiremu Nero-Te-awa-i-taia, Tikapa, Ruihana-Te-whakaheke, Wata-Kuku-tai, Wiremu-Te-wheoro, Hoterene-Tai-pari, Hoani Nahe, Hohepa-Tama-i-hengia, and Te-ao (of Kawhia), of the Tai-nui ;

Te Otene-Kikokiko, Te Keene-Tanga-roa, Wi Tipene, Paikea, Matitikuha, Tipene (of Whangarei), Paora-Tu-haere, Waka-Nene, and Te-*Ngau*, of the Mahuhu ;

Mohi-Tawhai, Taka-horea, Taku-rua, Hakiaha (of Omanaia), Pereha-Te-kune, Te Mangumangu, Papahia, Aperahama-Tao-nui, Moe-tara, Te-Atua-wera, and Whare-papa, of the Mamari ;

Hori Kingi-Te-anaua, Te-mawae, Hoani Wiremu Hi-pango, Kawana-Paepae, Pehi-tu-roa, Aperahama-Tama-i-parea, Mahau, Ihaia-Kiri-kumara, and Piri-Kawau, of the Ao-tea.

The recital of these names recalls the delightful hours, spread over the last half-century, when their possessors, most of whom are no longer in the flesh, sitting under a shady tree, on the outskirts of a forest, and remote from the abodes of men, rehearsed the sacred lore of their race, and in solemn dread slowly repeated the sacred incantations of their mythology, or performed the ceremonies of the Niu, Tohi-taau, Awa-moana, Ki-tao, Pihe, and other rites, as they were taught by those of past generations. In them I recognize men of

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PREFACE.

noble and heroic spirit, who, while they acknowledged and dreaded the malignant power of the gods of their fathers, yet dared to disclose some of their sacred lore to one of an alien race.

JOHN WHITE.

*Wellington, 3rd January, 1887.*

NOTE. —The alphabet of the Maori language consists of fourteen letters, which are hereunder given in the order in which they were arranged by those who first compiled the alphabet, namely:—

A	is pronounced as	<i>a</i>	in	Father
E	"	<i>a</i>	"	Fate
I	"	<i>e</i>	"	Fat
O	"	<i>o</i>	"	No
U	"	<i>oo</i>	"	Boot
H	is called	ha,	the	<i>a</i> pronounced as <i>a</i> in Father
K	"	ka,	"	"
M	"	ma,	"	"
N	"	na,	"	"
P	"	pa,	"	"
R	"	ra,	"	"
T	"	ta,	"	"
W	"	wa,	"	"

Ng is a nasal sound, and rather difficult to obtain; but if the English word "sting" is written thus, "stinga," and the added *a* sounded as *a* in "Father," the sound of the Maori Ng will be obtained.



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## ERRATA.

## ENGLISH.

- Page 8, line 4, *for dea read death.*  
 Page 8, line 7, *for wa read was.*  
 Page 8, line 13, *for ris read rise.*  
 Page 25, line 33, *for Tane-mini-whare read Tane-mimi-whare.*  
 Page 72, line 6, *for Matuku-uri-uri read Matuku.*  
 Page 79, after line 32 add "My food is man."  
 Page 81, line 3, *for rembling read trembling.*  
 Page 81, line 24, *for Mae-waho read Mae-wa-hua.*  
 Page 94, line 7, *for Pou-ma-tango-tango read Pou-ma-tanga-tanga.*  
 Page 121, line 7, *for Pu-o-te-toi read Pu-o-te-toe.*  
 Page 131, line 29, *for Hine-i-taurira read Hine-ata-uira.*  
 Page 142, line 33, *for Huru read Hurunga.*  
 Page 150, line 19, *for Io read Ia.*  
 Page 158, line 20, *for To-wheta-mai read Io-wheta-mai.*  
 Page 171, line 13, *for Kumi-kumi-maroro (stiff beard) read Kumi-kumi-maroro (strong beard).*  
 Page 176, line 9, *for Te Kapunga read Te Kaponga.*  
 Page 176, line 12, *for Pou-hoatu (the staff given) read Pou-hoata (spear stuck upright).*  
 Page 176, line 14, *for Moana-nui (great sea) read Moana-uri (black sea).*

## MAORI.

- Maori title-page, *for 1886 read 1887.*  
 Page 1, line 10, *for Werengitane read Werengitana.*  
 Page 7, line 38, *for akono read akona.*  
 Page 10, line 18, *for kia e kore read kai e kore.*  
 Page 10, line 20, *for mokia read mokai.*  
 Page 11, line 8, *for e marama a read e marama ai.*  
 Page 39, line 4, *for ka eki read ka eke.*  
 Page 40, line 7, *for tika ua read tika ana.*  
 Page 50, line 10, *for tuakina read tuakana.*  
 Page 61, read line 32 without the full stop at the end.  
 Page 65, line 33, *for ano read ana.*  
 Page 69, line 25, *for kahora read kahore.*  
 Page 72, line 17, *for Te mane read Te mare.*  
 Page 72, line 18, *for Te mane read Te mare.*  
 Page 73, line 4, *for Tane read Rupe.*  
 Page 77, line 33, *for Wo-hai-tiri read o Whai-tiri.*  
 Page 84, line 25, *for Puanga read Punga.*  
 Page 115, line 4, *for Mate read Mata.*  
 Page 115, line 7, *for Mate read Mata.*  
 Page 119, line 25, *for Tota read Toto.*  
 Page 144, line 27, *for Riwa read Kewa.*

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