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978-1-108-03962-8 - The Ancient History of the Maori, His Mythology and Traditions: Volume 4: Tai-nui

John White

Excerpt

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## INTRODUCTION.

O Petu! oh, how impatient thou art!  
 As Kahu-kura now is dimly seen—  
 As, near to death, I join myself  
 To Roha's warriors now,  
 That I may feel no pain from want of food.  
 Yes, *kumara* were landed here  
 And put in store; but then  
 The insect-tribe destroyed them all.  
 Maybe they were Te-whiti's power,  
 Who called on them to hide and to destroy  
 For ever all that there on cliffs  
 Might grow. Go, O food!  
 To distance go. My appetite  
 Shall still itself appease with thee,  
 Nor shall I or my children feel  
 Our future need or want of thee.

*A dirge sung by the hungry.*

TRIBAL DISPUTES OF THE MAORI PEOPLE IN RESPECT TO  
 THE KUMARA—HOW AND BY WHOM IT WAS BROUGHT TO  
 THESE ISLANDS (NEW ZEALAND).

MAJOR ROPATA WAHAWAHA, of Nga-ti-porou [East Cape] :

It was then agreed to go and bring the *kumara* from Hawa-iki, and the people assembled at night and held a council, and the gods were sought unto and propitiated, so that they might close the pits of the winds (*d*) and stay them, and calm the waves of the ocean, and that they should shield and uplift and aid in propelling the canoe, and enable her to sail swiftly. Then the canoe Horo-uta was drawn down and launched into the sea, and seventy [one hundred and forty] men embarked in her. Seventy sat on each side, to paddle. Kahu-kura also went on board,

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and the canoe proceeded on her voyage to Hawa-iki to obtain the *kumara*. Kahu-kura remained in Hawa-iki. The *kumara* was obtained in Hawa-iki, and Horo-uta returned to these Islands (New Zealand), and landed at Ahuahu (mound), Whanga-paraoa (harbour of the whale), Wai-apu (scoop water up in the palm of the hand), Turanga (lie at anchor), Nuku-tau-rua (extend two years), Here-taunga (propitiate to be allowed to remain), Te-whakawhitinga (the crossing), and Kai-koura (eat the crayfish), and at every place the crew left some *kumara*; and hence the words of the Horo-uta incantation, which is repeated when the *kumara*-crop is being planted. This is the incantation:—

Land of Ahuahu, where the *kumara* grows—

We were screened from the wave.

Land of Whaka-tane, where the *kumara* grows—

We were screened from the wave.

Land of Wai-apu, where the *kumara* grows—

We were screened from the wave.

Land of Whanga-paraoa, where the *kumara* grows—

We were screened from the wave.

Land of Turanga, where the *kumara* grows—

We were screened from the wave.

Land of Nuku-tau-rua, where the *kumara* grows—

We were screened from the wave.

Land of Here-taunga, where the *kumara* grows—

We were screened from the wave.

The name of each locality at which the *kumara* was left was thus repeated as part of this incantation.

IRAIA TU-TANGA WAI-O-NUI, of Whanga-nui :

O friends, the Maori people! I object to the words of Major Ropata Wahawaha, when he rehearsed the account of the *kumara* in the presence of the Nga-ti-porou Tribe. He states that Kahu-kura went to Hawa-iki and obtained the *kumara*, and that the canoe in which he went on that voyage was called Horo-uta. Friends, his assertions are all a myth. He has invented them while sitting in front of his house. Now, my ignorant friends of that tide (East Coast), and even those men who uttered these words, hearken. This food, the *kumara*, was obtained by my

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## EACH MIGRATION BROUGHT THEIR OWN KUMARA. 5

ancestor Turi, and the canoe in which he brought the *kumara* here was called Ao-tea, and the locality in which the *kumara* was planted in these Islands (New Zealand) was called Hekeheke-i-papa (descent from the flat), in the Pa-tea (fair *pa*) district. Friends of the Nga-ti-porou Tribe, of the East Coast, do not believe, nor state, that the *kumara* was brought here in the canoe Horo-uta, nor state that your ancestors went to and brought the *kumara* from Hawa-iki, lest your children believe that false statement—lest they rest their belief on false knowledge and ignorance.

The Rev. MOHI TUREI, of Wai-apu :

This is my answer to the words of condemnation spoken by Iraia Tu-tanga respecting the words of Major Ropata, of Nga-ti-porou, regarding the introduction of the *kumara* in the canoe Horo-uta.

O friend! the man who contradicts the words of Major Ropata, you are verily the man who utters myths, and you call on us, the people of the East Coast, to hearken to your words. Friend, do you really know that we, the Nga-ti-porou, are descended from Turi? You speak falsely. Do you know that we, the Poro-u-rangi Tribe, came in the canoe Ao-tea? You speak a falsehood. What you state in regard to your *kumara*-cultivation called Hekeheke-i-papa is true, and in the days of your ancestor Turi the *kumara* was cultivated in Hekeheke-i-papa; but does the *kumara* still grow, or are the offshoots of that *kumara* which you say your ancestors introduced into New Zealand still growing, at Hekeheke-i-papa to this day? If this is the case, then you are right in what you say in respect to our tribe, the Nga-ti-porou.

This is what I would say to you: You possess your *kumara*, and your own ancestor, and your *kumara*-cultivations; and I have my *kumara*, my ancestors, and my *kumara*-cultivations.

The water of the hold of the canoe Horo-uta was baled out at Wai-apu: hence my proverb in regard to the abundance of food we possess. The proverb is this:

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“How great is the quantity taken out of the hold of Horo-uta! too much to be collected;” and another of my proverbs says, “Food has come on shore on the coast of Wai-apu, and abundance is in the valleys of Tapui-parahēka (familiar spirits of the soft and mouldy).”

When the canoe Horo-uta landed at Wai-apu the *kumara* was at once planted to produce a crop, and the name of this plantation was Whaka-rara-nui (ridges spread out to great extent), where to this day the offspring of that *kumara* may be seen growing, and where I, the Nga-ti-porou Tribe, go and take up the crop of such in the tenth moon of the year, and where we leave the vines of the *kumara*, so that in taking the crop up we cover those vines in the soil, and these grow again and yield a crop. This we have done since the days when Horo-uta landed the *kumara*, and even down to the present time.

Friend, hence I say unto you, be clear and correct in what you say against Major Ropata, and listen to what is said respecting the *kumara* brought here by my ancestors, and which is still growing and yielding a crop; as is also the *hutu-kawa* (*Metrosideros tomentosa*), which points out the site of that *kumara*-cultivation, and which is still growing on one side of that garden. The name of that garden is O-teko-mai-tawhiti (rock from a distance). The *mapau* (*Myrsine urvillei*), the sacred rod used by the priests while performing the ceremonies and chanting the incantations when the crop is being planted, is still seen growing near the garden, and is called Atiati-hinga (drive away to fall).

HOANI NAHE, of Hau-raki [the Thames] :

O friends, all the tribe! salutations to you all. Now hearken. We have heard the words spoken by the Nga-ti-porou at Mata-ahu (face turned towards) to you all, where Major Wahawaha, chief of the Nga-ti-porou, spoke about Kahu-kura, who he states went to Hawa-iki in the canoe Horo-uta to fetch the *kumara*.

Now, O my friends! I have heard of the words spoken there by Major Ropata; but at the time I heard of the

MARAMA AND WHAKAOTI-RANGI BROUGHT KUMARA. 7

words of his speech I did not take exception to them, as I then thought his words were his own, and were a myth of his own invention, composed in front of his own house; but when I heard of the words of Iraia-tutanga-wai-o-nui (portion, division), son of Maru-era of Whanga-nui, condemning what Major Ropata had said, I noticed that he had made use of this sentence: "What Major Ropata has said, and what the Nga-ti-porou Tribe also say, is not true. It was not Kahu-kura who went to Hawa-iki and brought the *kumara* in the Horo-uta; but my ancestor Turi brought the *kumara* thence in the canoe Ao-tea."

Now, all ye tribes of these Islands (New Zealand), of the South and the North, hearken to my words in respect to what these men say. These two men are each confused (led astray), and appear to think that their two tribes are the most learned of all the tribes who inhabit these Islands of New Zealand, and that they two are the two most learned men, and are the most able of all men to rehearse the genealogies and history of all the tribes who inhabit these Islands. But my objection to Iraia-tutanga-wai-o-nui (portion of the great water) is because of the attempt he makes to take the beclouding object out of his friend's eyes, while he has a cause of blindness in his own eyes.

Now, hearken, O ye tribes of these Islands of New Zealand! Each tribe has its own *kumara*, which were brought in the canoes in which its ancestors migrated to these Islands. I have my own *kumara*, which was brought over to these Islands on board of the canoe Tai-nui, which was the canoe of Hotu-nui (great sob) and Hotu-roa (long sob); in which also came the women Marama (light) and Whakaoti-rangi (the heavens complete), with many others; and these were the women who brought the *kumara*, the *hue* (gourd), the *aute* (*Broussonetia papyrifera*), and the *paraa* (*Marattia salicina*) with them in that canoe from Hawa-iki. Also the *karaka* (*Corynocarpus laevigata*) was brought in this canoe; but the *karaka* here spoken of was used as skids in hauling Tai-nui up on to the sea-beach in the Manuka (anxious) (Manu-kau—all birds) Harbour, near to

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Auckland, and is to be seen growing at Awhitu (regret) to this day.

Tai-nui (great tide) was dragged across the neck of land at Tamaki (invalid) into the Manuka (regret) Harbour on her voyage to Ka-awhia (embraced) (Kawhia), where she is to be seen to this day, turned into stone.

When the Tai-nui arrived at Kawhia the seeds which the two women, Marama and Whakaoti-rangi, had brought with them from Hawa-iki were planted; but each female set the seeds which she had brought in a different plot of ground from that occupied by her friend. The district in which these seeds were cultivated in Kawhia was called the Papa-o-karewa (the uplifted flat). When the seeds which were set by Marama grew, the *kumara* grew into the *po-hue* (*Convolvulus clematis*), and the *hue* grew into the *mawhai* (*Sicyos angulatus*), and the *aute* grew into the *whau* (*Entelea arborescens*), and the *paraa* grew into the *horo-kio* (*koro-kio*) (*Veronica*); and thus it was seen that all the seeds, and roots, and bulbs set by Marama changed their nature and grew into that which was not like the seeds or bulbs which she had planted. The cause of this transformation was the sin she had committed with her slave man on her trip from the Thames overland to O-tahuhu (ridge-pole). But all the seeds and bulbs set by Whakaoti-rangi came up the same plants, bulbs, and roots as those set by her. The *kumara* produced the *kumara*, the *hue* came as the *hue*, the *aute* as *aute*, the *paraa* as *paraa*; and hence the proverb, "Great is the joy produced by the small basket of food of Whakaoti-rangi."

Do you hearken, O all people of these Islands! The canoe Tai-nui brought her own *kumara*, *hue*, *aute*, *paraa*, and also the skids of *kopi* (*karaka*), with the *kiore* (rat). And the canoes of the other migrations brought their own *kumara* with them.

Now, O Major Ropata and Iraia Tu-tanga! you say that the canoes Horo-uta and Ao-tea brought the *kumara* to these Islands of New Zealand. You, of all men, repeat the most absurd myth, falsehood, and invention. I ask,

KUMARA, HUE, AUTE, AND PARAA WERE BROUGHT. 9

what canoes are those whose arrival in these Islands of New Zealand was not known? What canoes were they whose names were not repeated in the list in which Tai-nui, Arawa, Mata-tua, Kura-hau-po, and Toko-maru were named, as these were the principal canoes which arrived in these Islands when the Maori people took up their abode in New Zealand? Now, though when the history of those canoes is rehearsed the name of Tai-nui is invariably repeated first, and before the names of all the other canoes which arrived here, yet it is not asserted that Tai-nui is the only canoe of all the migrations which brought the *kumara* to these Islands of New Zealand. Nor can it be asserted that the learned men of old ever made such a statement as that, of all the canoes of the various migrations, Tai-nui was the only canoe which brought the *kumara* to New Zealand.

An account of all the canoes of the various migrations is given in the song composed by Peau (turned aside), of the Nga-ti-raukawa Tribe, in remembrance of Te-tahuri (the turned) and his wife, which song has been heard, known, and sung by all the tribes, even to that of Tu-roa (long standing) at Whanga-nui (great harbour). And, O Iraia-tutanga! perhaps you have an intimate knowledge of that song, as you are of the Whanga-nui people. You tell us the name of your father, and maybe he is the most learned man in these Islands, and perhaps the greatest and most powerful chief of all chiefs.

Now listen, and I will tell you another reason why I believe in what is said—"Tai-nui brought her own *kumara* to these Islands of New Zealand"—which is contained in the following song composed and sung by an old man of ancient times on account of his crop of *kumara* having been destroyed by rats. The old man was so despondent that he gave utterance to his grief in song, as follows:—

Here I sit, and heart of man  
 Requires to find some powerful charm  
 To counteract the ill befallen me.  
 Oh! now confusion's here confounded.

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But grow, O tendrils ! grow,  
 And flourish where ye sprout ;  
 The while I climb and sit on hill  
 In lonely mood outside my home.  
     O birds ! whose voice is hushed  
 Below me now at Rangi-ahua,  
 Come, meet again and sing your song.  
 I sacred am, and feel a dread  
 Of Rongo-tapu-hirahira (hingahinga)  
 (The great and sacred *kumara*).  
     But thou, O Tane ! promoter,  
 And he who calls great evil,  
 And parent of the forest-land,  
 Art not abashed to stand  
 In presence of the little mouth (man),  
 Or see the child of piercing tooth (rat)  
 Devour and blight my growing crop,  
 Which in days past sat sheltered  
 In the prow of Tai-nui,  
 And passed across the sea  
 With Hotu-roa in his canoe ;  
 When Hotu brought the *kumara*,  
 And blessed the sun-lit world with food.  
     Ah ! why now heed the gods' commands,  
 Or think their power as aught ?  
 Then cast thou all behind thy back,  
 And deem their power as ornaments ;  
 While Heaven propitious smiles,  
 And screens at once from evil's power.  
     Then cease thy charms to chant  
 And incantations sing to Hau-turu  
 And Te-whara. In those though sacred hills  
 Confusion and mistaken trust are placed.  
 Then press towards those hills, and see  
 If thou canst bite, and make an impress  
 Of thy teeth in them. But, oh ! the *kumara*  
 Still grows on cliffs in Hawa-iki,  
 Where germ, and sprout, and life  
 Of such were seen the first.  
 But rats have blighted all now here.

Now, O people of these islands of New Zealand ! do not  
 live in quiet joy, and tell your tales of myth to all around,  
 lest your ignorance and pitiable imbecility be seen.

That which causes me to feel sorrow is, lest the myths  
 which have been related as facts by those of my friends



who will persist in dealing in fiction be believed by the people. Truth is ever truth; but we, the relaters of history, utter fiction instead of truth.

TE-MOANA-ROA (long sea), of Whanga-ehu (harbour of mist), near Whanga-nui:

Let all the tribes hear what I say in condemnation of what the Rev. Mohi Turei, of Wai-apu, has spoken, in which he disputes the statements of Iraia Tu-tanga, son of Manuera-whakarewa (cause to float).

And you have spoken, O Rev. Mohi Turei! Salutations to you and to the words uttered by the people of that sea-shore of the east (East Cape)! We also, of this the west coast of New Zealand, have something to say.

O my friend Mohi! you ask, "Where did the *kumara* first grow in New Zealand?" and "Does the *kumara* still grow there?" I answer, "Yes; it is still growing, and I am in possession of it." The name of that *kumara* is Kahu-toto (garment of blood). I also possess the *karaka*, and these two were the food brought here by my ancestor Kupe from Hawa-iki.

When Turi came here he stayed in these Islands, and did not return again to Hawa-iki. But your canoe, O Mohi! returned to Hawa-iki. You make this assertion. But my canoe, called Ao-tea, in which my ancestors came here, did not return to Hawa-iki.

O friend Mohi Turei! your proverb which you repeat in regard to Wai-apu is true; and I also have a proverb for the *kumara* which my ancestor Turi brought to these Islands of New Zealand, which is this: "The girdle of Rongorongono." [Rongorongono was the wife of Turi.]

O friend Mohi Turei! do not suppose that you [your tribe] are the only descendants of those who came over the sea in the canoe you claim to be exclusively yours. No; you and I came over in that canoe [I as well as yourself am descended from those who came in that canoe]. I am here, and I am descended from Rongo-kako (trifling news), Ihenga-ariki (king of the swordfish), Whe-

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puanaki (dwarf with seed to plant), and Takou (sacred red ochre): I am a direct descendant of these men. Now, O friend! look at the matter thus: I am descended from Ihenga, I am his offspring known in the world at this day; but Ihenga did not possess the *kumara*. Also Ihenga was one who came in [descended from those who came in] that canoe (the canoe you call yours), Horo-uta; but the *kumara* which is cultivated by the tribe of this West Coast [the Taranaki Province] is all from the *kumara* brought here by Turi.

My friend, the food brought over by the canoe in which my ancestors came is this: the *kumara*. I will not dispute or contradict what you have said. Enough.

HOHEPA TE-POKI-TAUWHITU-POU (substantial prop), of Whanga-ehu, near Whanganui:

Friend, these are my words in answer to those of Hoani Nahe in regard to his contradicting the words of Major Ropata and Iraia Tu-tanga.

Friend Hoani Nahe, these are my words in answer to yours. You regard your words as correct. Do you think you are the only man who can rehearse our history from the most remote ages (*po*), and is it thus you assume such supreme knowledge? Why did you not remember that all men derive their origin from the gods, who first came from the world of *po* (spirits)?

Friend, you are truly the most incorrect man who attempts to rehearse our old history. In proof of this you ask about the canoes Ao-tea and Horo-uta. Maybe you are deaf. Ao-tea was the canoe in which Turi migrated to these Islands of New Zealand, and the god he had in that canoe was Maru (shade, shelter); the paddle of Turi was called Rakau-awhiti (wood of caution), and his baler was called Whakawaha-taupata (the carrier of the *taupata*—a shrub not unlike the laurel, the *Coprosma baueriana*). And the cargo of that canoe—that is, the food brought in her by Turi when he migrated here from Hawa-iki—was the *kumara* called Kahu-toto—which to this day is still