

## Nukutawhiti

Ngāpuhi and Te Rarawa



Nukutawhiti was a rangatira from Hawaiki and one of the early captains and navigators who sailed to Aotearoa. Nukutawhiti predated the formation of Ngāpuhi, however, his whakapapa line led to rangatira such as Rāhiri,<sup>1</sup> the widely celebrated rangatira in Ngāpuhi and Te Rarawa genealogy.<sup>2</sup> A range of narratives cite different reasons for Nukutawhiti's departure from Hawaiki. Some think that overpopulation and war were the reasons; others think that it was a general sense of adventure and excitement that led him to traverse the oceans, as Kupe had done before him.<sup>3</sup> Regardless of what the motivation was, when he and his hapū set off, Nukutawhiti said the following words to his people:

E tū te huru mā, haramai e noho,  
E tū te huru pango, hanatu e haere  
*Let the white hair remain here,  
Let the black hair get up and go<sup>4</sup>*

While Kupe is best known for his voyaging, he was also a master builder of carved houses and waka.<sup>5</sup> He and Tokaakuaku re-adzed Kupe's *Matawhaorua* for Nukutawhiti, using their adzes Ngāpakitua and Tauiraata. From that time on, the words 'Ngā toki' were added to the original name of the waka, and the celebrated *Ngātokimatawhaorua*<sup>6</sup> came into existence.<sup>7</sup> Building and re-adzing waka was an

immense undertaking: some say that the resources and time required to build waka were the most difficult part of the whole process, rather than the voyaging itself.

Nukutawhiti is known to have had an extensive repertoire of karakia that he issued at every stage of the voyage. Before their departure from Hawaiki, Nukutawhiti did a karakia that stirred up wild weather. The thunder clapped and the lightning flashed above them and before long a giant wave surged upwards. The wave lifted *Ngātokimatawhaorua* high up on its crest. As Nukutawhiti finished his karakia, the wave sped off towards distant Aotearoa, with *Ngātokimatawhaorua* surfing on top of it. This manner of travel is reflected in the following pepeha:

Ngāpuhi te aewa – ka rere i runga i te ngaru  
*Ngāpuhi the wanderers – they sail over the waves*<sup>8</sup>

*Ngātokimatawhaorua* travelled like this for three days and three nights, flanked by four taniwha – Āraiteuru, Niua, Puhimoanaariki, and Rangiuruhinga<sup>9</sup> – gliding in the water beside them. They were also supported by two atua – Te Hikooterangi and Maheretūkiterangi.<sup>10</sup> The departure of *Ngātokimatawhaorua* coincided with a nova, in which a star glowed so brightly that the nights were almost as bright as day.<sup>11</sup> As the waka surged along, the children onboard looked down at the surging waters below them and composed the following waiata:

Ngarunui, ngaruroa, ngarupaewhenua<sup>12</sup>  
Te ngaru i mauria mai ai a *Ngātokimatawhaorua*  
*Great wave, long wave, wave like a mountain range*  
*The wave that brought hither Ngātokimatawhaorua*<sup>13</sup>

On the fourth day, the power of Nukutawhiti's karakia began to subside. One of the taniwha, Puhimoanaariki, told Nukutawhiti that all of the taniwha had become trapped in Kahukura's net (Kahukura's net is a metaphor for a dangerous reef).<sup>14</sup> To set them free, Nukutawhiti sought the help of the tohunga Pātara and together they amplified their karakia so that the taniwha were freed, and the group were able to resume their voyage (Pātara was also known as Papaatara).<sup>15</sup> To acknowledge Puhimoanaariki's role in this part of the voyage, she was given another name, Puhiteaewa, to acknowledge the way she wandered back and forth along the wave.<sup>16</sup>

Not long after the taniwha were freed, Nukutawhiti spotted land-based seabirds, which told him that land was near.<sup>17</sup> As predicted, Aotearoa soon came into view and the people on board the waka

watched with awe as they approached Te Hokianganui a Kupe.<sup>18</sup> As they sailed into the harbour, the ocean became rough, and great waves forced *Ngātokimatawhaorua* towards some rocks. To calm the sea and allow his people to land, Nukutawhiti recited a karakia to the atua Tāne and Tangaroa, and cast his amokura into the ocean as a gift to them (an amokura is a prized red feather from a rare bird, the red-tailed tropicbird). As a result of this, some Ngāpuhi believe that the mauri of their people is found in the water,<sup>19</sup> as reflected in the following pepeha:

Ko te mauri he mea huna ki te moana

*The mauri is hidden in the sea*<sup>20</sup>

When Nukutawhiti disembarked and took his first steps in Aotearoa, he stooped down and plucked eight rimurimu (seaweed) shoots,<sup>21</sup> two of which he sent back to Hawaiki with two of the taniwha – Puhiteaewa and Rangiuruhinga. This was a message for Kupe, to inform him that the people of *Ngātokimatawhaorua* had arrived safely. The taniwha Āraiteuru and Niua became guardians of the entrance to the Hokianga harbour, where they materialise in many forms to this day, including rocks and waves.<sup>22</sup> Finally, the people were met by Tīrairaka, who had travelled over earlier on Kupe’s waka the *Matawhaorua*. They dragged *Ngātokimatawhaorua* into a rock cave, where the celebrated waka hourua was left and eventually turned to stone itself.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>1</sup> M. Kawharu, *Tāhuhu Kōrero*, p. 94.

<sup>2</sup> J. Evans, *Ngā Waka o Neherā*, p. 104.

<sup>3</sup> Taonui, ‘Te Haerenga Waka’, p. 453; F. Keene, *Tai Tokerau*, p. 53.

<sup>4</sup> Kawharu, *Tāhuhu Kōrero*, p. 94.

<sup>5</sup> H. Kāmira, ‘Kupe’, p. 217.

<sup>6</sup> Some refer to the waka as *Ngātokimatawhaorua* (M. Kawharu, 2008, p. 89), while others refer to it as

*Ngātokimātāhourua* (H. Kāmira, 1957, p. 229).

<sup>7</sup> Evans, *Ngā Waka o Neherā*, pp. 104–06.

<sup>8</sup> Kawharu, *Tāhuhu Kōrero*, p. 73.

<sup>9</sup> Kāmira, ‘Kupe’, p. 244.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.* p. 227.

<sup>11</sup> Waitangi Tribunal, *He Whakaputanga me Te Tiriti*, p. 27.

<sup>12</sup> The names above were also entrenched in whakapapa, as Nukutawhiti had Ngarunui, Ngarunui had

Ngaruroa, and Ngaruroa had Ngarupaewhenua (B. Tipene-Hook, 2011, p. 7; H. Sadler, 2014, p. 75).

<sup>13</sup> Kāmira, 'Kupe', pp. 229, 245.

<sup>14</sup> H. Sadler, *Ko Tautoro te Pito o Tōku Ao*, p. 78.

<sup>15</sup> Kāmira, 'Kupe', p. 229.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 230; Kawharu, *Tāhuhu Kōrero*, p. 70.

<sup>17</sup> Evans, *Ngā Waka o Neherā*, pp. 104–06.

<sup>18</sup> Keene, *Tai Tokerau*, p. 50–51.

<sup>19</sup> Waitangi Tribunal, *He Whakaputanga me Te Tiriti*, p. 27.

<sup>20</sup> Kawharu, *Tāhuhu Kōrero*, p. 89.

<sup>21</sup> Kāmira, 'Kupe', p. 231; H. Sadler, *Ko Tautoro te Pito o Tōku Ao*, p. 78.

<sup>22</sup> Kawharu, *Tāhuhu Kōrero*, p. 92.

## Whakapapa as pedagogy: How to use this narrative in your classroom

This narrative has presented Nukutawhiti as an illustrious and inspiring ancestor. He was a rangatira possessing immense scientific knowledge and navigational skill. He was adept with karakia and was a fearless trailblazer, using karakia to stir up the wild weather to propel his people towards Aotearoa. As well as being a leader himself, he was also influenced by others, following in the footsteps of his own tupuna Kupe, whose navigational advice guided Nukutawhiti to the Hokianga. He was prepared to seek help when he needed it, calling on the tohunga Pātara to help him to free the taniwha.

This important narrative, among innumerable others, should be something that all students in Aotearoa New Zealand learn about at school. Educating students about Māori knowledge, whakapapa, and ways of knowing the world will enable all students to consider the many ways Māori have not only survived but thrived despite the systematic devaluing and misrepresentation of Māori identity, culture, and knowledge systems throughout history. Whakapapa narratives like this one about Nukutawhiti are inherently stories of survival; they are about regaining ways of being that allow Māori students to be culturally proud and secure in their knowledge that their whakapapa (genealogy, history, and connectedness to all things in the universe) comprises narratives filled with persistence, aspiration, and accomplishment.

*Some examples of the ways this narrative might be used across the curriculum are:*

**Mathematics:** If we imagine that Nukutawhiti started his journey in Tāhiti, and travelled through Tonga, Samoa and Rarotonga before reaching the Hokianga Nui a Kupe, Aotearoa – how far did he travel and how long would it have taken to reach Aotearoa? How big would the waka have to be to carry 10, 20 or 50 people comfortably on such a long journey?

**Science:** What natural scientific phenomena guided/aided Nukutawhiti on his travels to Aotearoa? Explain the observable patterns associated with one of these phenomena in your own words (eg., ocean currents, cloud formations, star constellations, wind patterns, or birds).

**Technology:** Nukutawhiti constructed kete to hang of the side of his boat to keep live fish for his journey. Construct a kete out of a variety of materials and test it for durability in water and strength. Carry out a “fair test” on the reliability of the kete construction.