

The waka *Te Arawa* in Aotearoa

by Mataia Keepa (Te Arawa, Ngāti Maniapoto, Ngāti Rārua)

The tūpuna of Te Arawa arrived in Aotearoa over six hundred years ago, settling in the Bay of Plenty and Rotorua Lakes. The waka that gave the iwi its name was originally called *Ngā Rākau-e-rua-mātahi-pū-a-Atuamatua*. It was later renamed *Te Arawa* after running into a great whirlpool, Te Korokoro-o-Te-Parata, on the journey to New Zealand. The waka was captained by Tamatekapua. In Te Arawa traditions, he was accompanied by Whakaotirangi, one of his wives, and the navigator Ngātoroirangi and his wife, Kearoa. They left Hawaiki to escape conflict that began when Tamatekapua's dog was killed and eaten by a rival chief. These tūpuna carried many taonga of importance to Māori, and many places in the North Island take their names from stories connected to those who came on *Te Arawa*.

The first landing site

To those aboard *Te Arawa*, the flowers of the Pōhutukawa at Taungawaka looked like red birds perched on the branches. The tūpuna threw away their taininihi – the red-plumed headdresses they brought from Hawaiki – thinking they could replace their weathered ones with vibrant new ones made from the feathers of the “birds” they had seen in the trees. Realising their mistake, they circled back to retrieve their discarded taininihi, but some had already been lost to the sea. Others washed ashore and were claimed by people already living at Taungawaka.



TAUNGAWAKA

“Kuiwai e, Haungaroa e, ka riro au i te tonga, tukuna mai te ahi!”

“O Kuiwai, O Haungaroa, I am seized by the cold wind to the south, send me fire!”

On top of Tongariro, Ngātoroirangi called to his sisters Kuiwai and Haungaroa to send him fire so he wouldn't die in the cold. The name of the maunga comes from his chant – tonga, meaning “south wind,” and riro, meaning “seized”. Volcanic activity in much of the North Island is said to come from the fire he received.



TONGARIRO

TE WHANGANUI-A-TARA

TONGARIRO

MAKETŪ

TĀMAKI MAKAURAU

RANGITOTO

MOEHAU

MOEHAU



Te Moenga-hau-o-Tamatekapua – “the windy sleeping place of Tamatekapua”

Tamatekapua named this peak near the top of the Coromandel, to inform his people – particularly his sons – where he would like to be buried. Tamatekapua is said to rest upon Moehau to this day.

MAKETŪ



Tokaparore – anchor stone of *Te Arawa*

Centred in the estuary at Maketū is this concrete structure, said to mark where Tokaparore, one of the anchor stones from *Te Arawa*, lies.

Te kete-rokiroki-a-Whakaotirangi – the secure basket of Whakaotirangi

Whakaotirangi is said to have brought kūmara seedlings in her kete and kept them safe from the great whirlpool. She planted the seeds among her many gardens in the Bay of Plenty to feed the people of Te Arawa.

The resting place of *Te Arawa*

At Maketū, *Te Arawa* was burned by Raumati, a rival chief. Its remains can still be seen today in the red skies at sunset, which some elders say are the lingering embers of the waka.



RANGITOTO

Te Rangi-i-toto-ai-te-ihu-o-Tamatekapua

“Rangitoto” is an abbreviation of this phrase, meaning “the day Tamatekapua's nose bled”. Te Arawa people maintain that Rūaero, the original husband of Whakaotirangi, challenged Tamatekapua to a fight and struck him on the nose in revenge for luring Whakaotirangi onto *Te Arawa*.

