

*Polynesian Mythology and Ancient
Traditional History of the New Zealand
Race, as Furnished by Their Priests and
Chiefs*

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File Description:

This file collects plot summaries and relevant keywords for selected stories in *Swahili Tales, As Told by Natives of Zanzibar* (1855) by George Grey and various Māori coauthors/co-creators. Indu Ohri's students developed these materials for an introductory survey course on literature and the visual arts from Romanticism to the modern day during summer 2022 at Boston University.

As part of a class assignment, students created these materials about the folklore collections on the *One More Voice* (OMV) website. Each student read one folktale and devised a short plot summary of important events and characters and 3-5 keywords indicating the folktale's major concepts, themes, or Indigenous terms. In addition, some students contributed extra materials such as keyword definitions, long plot summaries, and an essay that contextualizes the folktale "How Kimyera Became King of Uganda" more fully in terms of social hierarchy.

These collections were frequently the first vehicles for sharing people of color's voices with western readers because colonial administrators would gather folklore from local coauthors/co-creators who they often failed to acknowledge. The materials are meant to guide a general scholarly audience of educators, graduate students, and college students who may be unfamiliar with these folktales as well as to enrich the public's knowledge about Indigenous folklore.

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Grey, George, ed. *Polynesian Mythology, and Ancient Traditional History of the New Zealand Race, as Furnished by Their Priests and Chiefs*. Translated by George Grey. London: John Murray, 1855.

<https://archive.org/details/polynesianmythol00greyuoft/page/n5/mode/2up>.

“The Legend of Tawhaki”

Plot Summary:

The main character is Tawhaki, son of Hema and Urutonga, with a younger brother, Karihi, and wife, Hinepiripiri. One day, he goes fishing and his four brothers-in-law attempt to murder him. After he is buried alive, Hinepiripiri recovers him and Tawhaki creates a village on a mountain with his allies. He calls upon the gods to flood the world, killing all other humans in “The overwhelming of the Mataaho.” Tawhaki, Karihi, and Urutoga then avenge Hema’s death by killing the Ponaturi. This bravery impresses Tango-Tango (or Hapai), a maiden from the heavens who becomes Tawhaki’s second wife and mother of his daughter, Arahuta. Tango-Tango returns to the heavens after Tawhaki says Arahuta smells bad during her baptism, prompting Tawhaki and Karihi to search for Arahuta. Tawhaki finds his brothers-in-law, who expose his true identity to Tango-Tango. Tawhaki and Tango-Tango eventually come to a mutual understanding and properly baptize their daughter.

Keywords: Family, Revenge, Race, and Heavens

Keyword Definitions: There are no definitions for this item.

“Rupe’s Ascent into Heaven”

Plot Summary:

In this story, there are two main characters: Hinauri, or Ihungarupaea, and her brother, Mauimua, or Rupe. Ihungarupae is lost at sea, but she is found by two brothers who claim her as their wife and she falls pregnant. She then is taken by the brothers’ superior chief and kills his two other wives because they treat her so poorly. During this time, Rupe is very upset that his sister has gone missing, so he goes out looking for her. After looking everywhere for Ihungarupae, he decides he needs to check the heavenly regions. On his journey, Rupe meets Rehua, who fed Rupe Tui birds. He discovers that he has found his sister, who married in the dwelling of Tinirau. Rupe takes his sister and her baby to Rehua’s dwelling, where it is revealed that Rupe’s first name was Maui-mua and he is only called Rupe after his transformation into a bird.

Keywords: Family, Transformation, and Religion

Keyword Definitions: There are no definitions for this item.

“Kae’s Theft of the Whale”

Plot Summary:

Tinirau, the father of Tuhuruhuru, wishes for a magician to enchant his child so that he may be a mighty warrior. Kae, the old magician, is able to successfully perform the enchantment and is thus awarded with delicious flesh from Tinirau’s whale, Tutunui. Kae loves the meat so much that he steals the whale and shares the meat with his tribe. Tinirau is outraged, so he sends women from his village to bring Kae back. They kidnap Kae and bring him in their long canoe. They place the sleeping Kae in Tinirau’s home, which looks much like Kae’s home. Once Kae wakes up, Tinirau’s people pretend to act like Kae’s people, saying that Tinirau has arrived at their village as a visitor. Kae is killed after figuring out that he is not in his own village. Kae’s people retaliate by invading Tinirau’s village and killing his son.

Keywords: Retaliation, Consequences, and Selfishness

Keyword Definitions: There are no definitions for this item.

“The Murder of Tuwhakararo and its Revenge”

Plot Summary:

Tuwhakararo is the son of Rupe and Apakura. His sister, Mairatea, gets married to the son of the chief named Poporokewa from the Ati-hapai tribe. She moves in with him into a house belonging to the tribe. Tuwhakararo visits his sister and his brother-in-law's younger sister takes a liking to him and always shows it, even though she is in a courtship. Tuwhakararo wrestles with the younger sister's lover and Tuwhakararo beats him in both matches. Tuwhakararo is then killed by the man and the friends cut up Tuwhakararo's body, eat him, and hang up his bones. The news gets back to Tuwhakararo's tribe and Whakatau-Potiki, his brother, devises a plan for revenge. The warriors arrive at the home, where Whakatau-Potiki finds his sister and then hangs Poporokewa by a rope. The rest of the warriors set fire to the entire home and kill the people who try to escape.

Keywords: Family, Revenge, Murder, Tension, and Jealousy

Keyword Definitions: There are no definitions for this item.

“The Adventures of Rata—the Enchanted Tree”

Plot Summary:

Rata’s father is killed by Matukutakotako. Rata is unsatisfied with his father’s death, so he searches for the man who killed his father. On his search, a man tells him where Matukutakotako would be at a specific time, giving Rata the opportunity to kill him in vengeance for his father’s death. Still, Rata will not be deterred from finding his father’s bones, and through his treacherous journey in the forest land, he needs a canoe. Rata tries slaughtering the enchanted tree, which does not work. The children of Tane ridicule Rata for his lack of authority, but they make him a canoe. With his canoe and warriors, Rata is able to obtain his father’s bones. Rata’s grandson Whakatau has similar powers to Rata and is asked to avenge the death of Rata’s son, Tuwhakararo. Whakatu has certain criteria for when he would help and later, through difficulty, he avenges Tuwhakaro after burning down a house full of enemies.

Keywords: Family, Vengeance, Enchanted Tree, and Death

Keyword Definitions: There are no definitions for this item.

“The Quarrels at Hawaiki”

Plot Summary:

The story opens with two brothers, Whakaturia and Tama', who canoe to the island of Aotea in search of their lost dog, Potaka-tawhiti. It is the spirit of this dog that leads the brothers to a poporo tree, ripe with fruit. While enjoying the bounty that the brothers have found night after night, the locals, Uenuku, and his people notice that fruit is continuously going missing. The locals then ambush the brothers one night, but Tama' fortunately is able to make an escape. As the locals sentence Whakaturia to death by smoke inhalation, Tama' sneaks an elaborate escape plan to Whakaturia. Fortunately for Whakaturia, the elaborate plan succeeds, allowing both him and Tama' to leave the justice-hungry locals behind. This escape acts as the catalyst for an incredibly destructive war between the two towns, culminating in the victors cannibalizing the defeated.

Keywords: Hawaiki, Dance, War, Tribe, and Aotea

Keyword Definitions: There are no definitions for this item.

“The Discovery of New Zealand”

Plot Summary:

Hine-tu-a-hoanga, the owner of Whaiapu, has a conflict with Ngahue, the owner of the stone Poutini, which forces Ngahue to leave his former resting place. Ngahue then goes to Arahura (the West Coast of the middle island), where he makes a new home for his jasper. Ngahue then returns to Hawaiki and tells the people that he has found a country rich in moas and jasper, later known as New Zealand. The pieces of Poutini jasper that are left in New Zealand are later shed downstream and turn into a rich source of greenstone. The Maori used the greenstone to make tools and worshipped the mineral as a sacred object (Riebeek). In the legend, the quarrel between Hine-tu-a-hoanga and Ngahue causes the discovery of New Zealand and creates the legend of the origin of the precious greenstone resources in New Zealand today.

Keywords: Hine-tu-a-hoanga, Ngahue, Argument, Poutini, and Discovery

Keyword Definitions: There are no definitions for this item.

“The Voyage to New Zealand”

Plot Summary:

Tama-te-kapua is the leader of the Arawa canoe. He realizes when boarding his canoe that he has no skillful priest and wise man, so he decides to manipulate Ngatoro-i-rangi, the chief who has command of the Tainui, and his wife, Kearoa (Grey 136). However, Tama ambushes the two by having two thefts on the canoe and taking Ruao's wife, Whakaoti-rangi, and Ngatoro and his wife. Tama takes Whakaoti-rangi to be his wife. While thinking of ways to escape the canoe, Ngatoro ties a piece of Kearoa's hair to his hand to not have her taken. However, Tama does try to take her, and Ngatoro wants to seek revenge. Ngatoro calls to the heavens to change from evening to morning. Then, the canoe falls into the whirlpool, “The throat of Te Parata,” at Whanga-Paraoa, in Aotea. Arriving on the island, they concluded that the Tainui were the first to arrive.

Keywords: “The Throat of Te Parata,” Tama-te-kapua, and Ngatoro-i-rangi

Keyword Definitions:

“The Throat of Te Parata”: The first of three essential keywords that are important in “The Voyage to New Zealand” is “The throat of Te Parata,” which stands for the whirlpool that Ngatoro creates to land on the island and get away from Tama (Grey 140).

Tama-te-kapua: The second of three keywords is Tama-te-kapua. Tama is the leader of the Arawa canoe. He tricks Ngatoro and his wife and is a wife stealer.

Ngatoro-i-rangi: Ngatoro-i-rangi is the third essential figure in the story. Ngatoro is a spiritual leader and wise man. As well as being a leader of his canoe, Tama tricks him into getting his canoe lost at sea.

“The Curse of Manaia”

Plot Summary:

Kuiwai is married to Manaia. Manaia curses Kuiwai and her brother because she does not cook food well. Kuiwai sends her daughter with the gods to her brother, Ngatoro. After the girl arrives and meets her uncle Ngatoro-i-rangi, they perform the ceremony to eliminate the curse. Then, Ngatoro curses back and talks to Kuiwai. Kuiwai tells Ngatoro that the whole tribe of Manaia are continually occupied in praying to their gods to bring Ngatoro and his tribe here, dead. She says perhaps their incantations may now bring Ngatoro here. The next day, Ngatoro and his soldiers pretend they were brought by God. They surprise the tribes of Manaia and successfully occupy the town. Manaia escapes. He soon assembles another army and fights back. However, he loses his second battle and escapes again. Manaia starts to refit his canoes. He finds Ngatoro later and asks for a fight. The night before the battle, Ngatoro performs religious rites, calling for aid from storms. Manaia is finally killed by the storm and the whole race of Manaia is destroyed.

Keywords: Retribution, Religion, and Supernatural

Keyword Definitions: There are no definitions for this item.

“Hatupatu and his Brothers”**Plot Summary:**

Hatupatu and his brothers hunt birds with spears near a local river. However, Hatupatu discovers he does not receive his fair share of food, as his brothers store the extra meat in a storehouse. Hatupatu decides to sneak into the storehouse and eat the birds. To cover it up, he wounds himself as if an enemy tribe raided the house. Eventually, his brothers discover the truth. Out of spite, Hatupatu's brothers kill him, but he is brought back to life by a spirit sent by his parents. Hatupatu then meets a girl named Kuragaituku and steals her treasures and property. Afterwards, he returns home and fights with his brothers until their father scolds them and commands them to fight the local enemy. Hatupatu leads them to victory against the enemy during the war and finally gets respect from his family.

Keywords: Family, Respect, and Dignity

Keyword Definitions: There are no definitions for this item.

“The Emigration of Turi to New Zealand”

Plot Summary:

The ancestor of the Wanganui tribe in New Zealand, Turi, was once determined to avenge one of his young relatives' deaths. He then plans and kills the little son of his enemy. He even takes the little child's heart out and lets the enemy eat part of the child. Later, Turi hears a chant cursing him for killing the child, so he seeks the way to escape. He meets a man named Kupe, who killed his friend in the sea. Turi is then told to head straight east to where the sun rises and find a river there. He fools his brother-in-law into coming, and they encounter many difficulties on the voyage, but they eventually make their way to a small island. They hold a ceremony there and then come into conflict on which way to continue—and one of them dies after sailing a different way. Turi, continuously praying on his sail, eventually reaches New Zealand. He makes his explorations there, including finding the river, and plants many crops, establishing different tribes in the west coast such as Wanganui.

Keywords: Adventure, Conflicts, Religion, and Scheme

Keyword Definitions: There are no definitions for this item.

“The Emigration of Manaia”

Plot Summary:

There is a man named Manaia who has a wife. He goes on a fishing trip and catches a fish by its tail. This incident is a sign that his wife is being mistreated. He returns to Tupenu and plans to take revenge. There is a war and his son, Tu-ure-nui, is supposed to slay the first enemy, but another man, Kahu-kaka-nui, kills the first enemy because Tu-ure-nui is too afraid. Kahu-kaka-nui turns out to be Manaia's son. Manaia then goes in search of a new island. His brother-in-law did not want him to leave, so he chases after Manaia, and Manaia ends up killing him with an axe. When Manaia finds a new island, he comes across another group who claims they were there first. After an argument, Manai gives in and goes in search of new land. He kills the original occupants of another land and takes over. Manai renames the land after his son, Tu-ure-nui.

Keywords: “Catching fish by its tail,” Emigration, Country, and Manaia

Keyword Definitions: There are no definitions for this item.

“The Story of Maru-tuahu, and that of Kahureremoa”**Plot Summary:**

As the son of a former chief of a village in New Zealand, Maru’s father leaves his old village and a wife pregnant with his son, Maru, fleeing from a false accusation of stealing harvests. Grown-up Maru embarks on a journey to visit his father, now living as a chief of another village with a new family. Along the way, he encounters the daughters of another chief, and the younger one later becomes his wife. Reuniting with his father, Maru slaughters a tribe that once mistreated Maru-tuahu, the story of which remains as a proverb to the present day. The second part of the story focuses on the daughter of Maru’s half-sister, who runs away from her village, escaping an arranged marriage, to her old crush, who is now a chief. Coming across each other on her journey, the two fall in love and establish a family. Their descendants prospered over the centuries.

Keywords: Marriage, Chiefship, Journey, Independence, and Revenge

Keyword Definitions: There are no definitions for this item.

“The Magical Wooden Head”

Plot Summary:

“The Magical Wooden Head” is a Polynesian mythological tale about a sorcerer named Hakawau who sets off to find a magical wooden head that causes death to anyone who looks at it. As he is making his journey to the head, the friend he brought keeps insisting that they are going to die at any moment, but Hakawau is determined, and they keep going. Even when they reach the most dangerous point and can smell and see the bodies of those who tried to make the journey before them, they still continue in search of the head. After defeating the evil spirits that protected the head, they go straight into the fortress. When they exit victorious, every soul in the fortress is dead.

Keywords: Sacred Mount, Waimatuku, and Genii

Keyword Definitions:

Sacred Mount: The name of the hill where the fortress that keeps the head is.

Waimatuku: The point where everyone who tried to get the head in the past died on their journey.

Genii: What Hakawau sends to attack and defeat the evil spirits protecting the fortress.

Works Cited

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<https://earthobservatory.nasa.gov/images/44059/the-greenstone-waters-new-zealand>.