

Paikea: he ariki, he tipua, he tangata / the legend, the ancient being, the person

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Abstract *“The Whale Rider” (1987) is described as a novel that retells the ‘myth’ of Paikea, the East Coast ancestor famed for arriving to the shores of Aotearoa-New Zealand on the back of a whale. What may appear as a work of fiction to some, to the descendants of Paikea he teaches us how to avoid impending death through an utter belief in our intangible connection with the spiritual world. This article looks at the ongoing influence the exploits of Paikea have on his descendants today.*

Keywords *Paikea; East Coast; Tangaroa; atua; whakapapa*

Uia mai koia, whakahuatia ake – you ask for elucidation

I hail from Te Tai Rāwhiti, the East Coast of the North Island of Aotearoa (New Zealand). Our marae (complex of buildings of ancestral and cultural significance), and our family home located right beside it, gaze directly out to the sea and bear witness to the turbulent waters that brought Paikea to these shores. I am not from Whāngārā-mai-Tawhiti, the place where Paikea eventually settled and called home. But I am a descendant of Paikea. His arrival on the East Coast signalled his permanent residency in Aotearoa. His subsequent offspring dispersed themselves throughout the East Coast region and it is through them that we are all able to claim descent from Paikea.

Ko Ngāti Porou te iwi
My tribe is Ngāti Porou
Ko Te Whānau-a-Hunaara te hapū
My sub-tribe is Te Whānau-a-Hunaara
Ko Karyn Paringatai tōku ingoa
My name is Karyn Paringatai

An important aspect of Māori society is whakapapa; the framework upon which relationships between the spiritual and physical worlds are created and enacted. Whakapapa is an intersecting network of multiple streams of genealogical knowledge handed down from one generation to the next. There are multiple lines of descent that I can trace my lineage from Paikea, one of which indicates at least 24 generations between me and this illustrious ancestor. Paikea is an ancestor of Porourangi, who is the eponymous ancestor after whom my iwi (tribe) is named – Ngāti Porou. Several generations down from Porourangi is Hunaara, who is the ancestor after whom my hapū (sub-tribe) is named – Te Whānau-a-Hunaara. Therefore, all descent lines from across the entire East Coast region and beyond, can claim Paikea as a founding ancestor in this country.

Within my iwi we often sing about Paikea. The words found at the beginning of most chapters in *The Whale Rider* are the lyrics of a haka (chanted form of oral expression) that we perform whenever the occasion arises to demonstrate our affiliation to Ngāti Porou. This haka is also often performed as a waiata (sung form of oral expression).

Uia mai koia, whakahuatia ake	<i>Ask and you will be told</i>
Ko wai te whare nei e?	<i>What is the name of this house?</i>
Ko Te Kani	<i>It is Te Kani</i>
Ko wai te tekoteko kei runga?	<i>Who is the sentinel on top?</i>
Ko Paikea! Ko Paikea!	<i>It is Paikea! It is Paikea</i>
Whakakau Paikea hī!	<i>Paikea who transformed</i>
Whakakau he tipua hī!	<i>Into an ancient being of the sea</i>
Whakakau he taniwha hī!	<i>Into the great denizen of the deep</i>
Ka ū Paikea ki Ahuahu	<i>And came to shore at Ahuahu</i>
Kei te whitia koe	<i>He is not one and the same as</i>
ko Kahutiaturangi	<i>Kahutiaturangi</i>
E ai tō ure ki te tamāhine	<i>And he did marry the daughter</i>
A Te Whironui	<i>Of Te Whironui</i>
Nāna i noho Te Rototahe	<i>Who lived at Te Rototahe</i>
Aue, aue, he koruru koe, e koro e	<i>You are now a figurehead, old one</i>

(Lythberg and Ngata 2022, 249–250)

The use of waiata and haka as a pedagogical tool for teaching and learning is important in all oral cultures to ensure the continuation of our knowledge from one

generation to the next (Whitinui 2010). Whatever the style of performance, singing or chanting about Paikea over successive generations ensures the accurate and continual transmission of his exploits.

We use several terms to describe Paikea in this waiata/haka. The title of this article, *Paikea: he ariki, he tipua, he tangata* incorporates three of those terms. They represent different states of being, each of which are underpinned by certain Māori cultural concepts and processes, which I will elaborate on as I describe Paikea as an ariki, a tipua and a tangata.

I acknowledge that there are many different versions of the story of Paikea. For this article I have used the story as it is acknowledged widely by my tribe of Ngāti Porou. I am by no means an authority on Paikea or his many exploits, but I am able to elaborate on the ongoing influence he has left on us and some of the learnings we can take away from him in each of these states of being as it pertains to the book, *The Whale Rider*.

Tangaroa

Māori creation stories are richly endowed with personifications, guardians and spiritual entities of many kinds. From a Māori perspective our world began with the separation of our sky father, Ranginui, and our earth mother, Papatūānuku, who clung to each other in a tight embrace. Ensnared between them were their numerous offspring, each of them representing a different part of the natural environment. These children soon grew tired of living in darkness and planned a way to separate their parents forever, and in doing so would finally be living in a world of light they so desperately craved (Reilly 2018).

The separation caused a rift amongst some of the siblings, and each retreated to their own domain. One of the children, Tangaroa, the atua (spiritual ancestor of ongoing influence) associated with the ocean and all things that dwell within, is particularly pertinent to *The Whale Rider*. In some traditions Tangaroa was the husband of Papatūānuku and supposedly had authority over the land and the sea (Jackson, Mita and Hakopa 2017). Which provides further explanation for the inter-reliance one domain has on the other. Tangaroa's offspring inhabit both spaces, as the marine life within the sea, but also the many lizards on land (Meredith 2006). One of Tangaroa's personifications, Tangaroa-whakamau-tai, also recognises Tangaroa as a controller of tides. He has a close relationship with the moon and is said to surface twice a day to breathe that causes the ebb and flow of the tides (Hanara 2019).

Māori have an innate connection with all atua for we are born of them, through them and for them. Every aspect of traditional Māori life was a careful balancing act, walking a fine line between the physical and spiritual worlds to ensure that no offense towards the atua occurred, lest they exact revenge on those who had trans-

gressed. Natural order needed to prevail for a subsistent lifestyle to be maintained. Ritual blessings were often recited to appease the atua, to ensure a bountiful season of food supplies, and to protect the health and wellbeing of the people (Murphy 2011). Tangaroa was, and still is, an essential atua as a source of life.

Tangaroa can be calm, Tangaroa can be life-giving, Tangaroa can be dangerous, Tangaroa can be destructive. It is within this realm that Paikea faces imminent death.

Paikea: He ariki

Paikea's origins take us back in time to far off Hawaiki, the homeland from whence Māori originally came before making the journey across Te Moana-nui-a-Kiwa (the Pacific Ocean). Paikea, whose original name in Hawaiki was Kahutiaturangi, was the son of the great chief, Uenuku. Uenuku was the ultimate authority of Hawaiki in his time and he dared anyone to challenge his authority, although doing so would come with serious consequence. Uenuku had many wives, as was common practice amongst chiefs of high status, and a privilege afforded to very few (Heuer 1968).

A fundamental purpose of existing was to have as many children as possible; to avenge deaths, to lay the platform for peace through marriage and to maintain continued occupation of geographical areas – but ultimately to ensure the continued legacy of those that have come before keeping intact chiefly descent lines. Claiming direct descent or highest descent from the atua is a proud claim to make in the whakapapa of high-born chiefs.

Kahutiaturangi/Paikea was the first-born from Uenuku's relationship with his most senior wife, who herself was also of chiefly descent. He was conceived and born on the takapau wharanui, the chiefly marriage mat.

And thus Kahutiaturangi/Paikea's status as an ariki was confirmed.

Paikea: He tipua

Ranginui and Papatūānuku, are the original sources of mana (personal authority, power, charisma) and tapu (divine restriction, sacredness). Therefore, their children, the atua of different domains, are imbued with mana and tapu of the highest levels.

A person is imbued with different types of mana according to their social standing or position within the community. It is accrued through occupation in the geographical area where one can claim continued genealogical descent (mana whe-

nua), through descent from certain high-ranking genealogical lines (*mana tan-gata*), and through descent from the gods (*mana atua*) (Marsden 2003).

The source of *tapu*, as with *mana*, can be traced back to Ranginui and Papatūānuku, and as such is an authority divinely bestowed upon us as descendants of those original sources. *Tapu* is a state of being that restricts certain actions from being undertaken. One purpose, amongst many, for these restrictions is to guide behaviour and provide navigational pathways to protect one's personal wellbeing from harm (Taani and Paringatai 2024).

Because *ariki* can claim descent directly from the *atua*, they were imbued with more *tapu* and *mana* than others. They were highly esteemed leaders, their actions righteous, and their word accepted as law. Kahutia-te-rangi/Paikea, as the first-born son of Uenuku, inherited all of these traits, rights and responsibilities.

Younger siblings, whilst still afforded certain special privileges as children of an *ariki*, played a lesser role in leadership. Of even lesser consequence are children born of servant wives. Ruatapu, Paikea's younger brother, was one such child. Ruatapu was continuously ill-treated by Uenuku, not physically, but verbally through insulting remarks that reminded him of his low-birth status and that he would never be destined for *ariki* status. Unlike Paikea.

Outraged at being treated so badly by his father, Ruatapu spitefully schemed a plot to kill Paikea and the rest of his higher born brothers in revenge of the shame he was caused to feel, knowing that this act of treachery would cause the most pain to Uenuku. Doing so would also mean that Ruatapu would be elevated in rank.

Ruatapu organised a fishing expedition with all of his brothers and put himself at the bow of the canoe, concealing a hole with the heel of his foot. Once out of sight of land, Ruatapu released his foot thereby flooding the waka. In the panic that followed, he systematically clubbed each of his brothers to death with one of his paddles. All except Paikea.

While Ruatapu was preoccupied with the slaughter of his brothers, Paikea performed a *karakia* (spiritual incantation) that his life might be spared. His *karakia* to Tangaroa was acknowledged in the appearance of the whale, paikea.

Ka hura, ka hura te moana uha

Revealed so is the matrilineal breath

Ka hura, ka hura te manawa pore

Revealed so is the simmering breath

Ko tō manawa, ko tōku manawa

Tis your breath, and mine also

Ko Houtina, ko Houmōata

Firm and fresh

Ki te ripia rei ana

Cutting and saturated by

Whakahotunuku, whakahoturangi

The swelling tides below and above

He rokihau, he taketake, he hurumanu te Calm then the restless sea
moana i rohia

Hoatu tō kauhau taniwha ki uta¹ So that we may reach the shore

(Lythberg and Ngata 2022, 249)

Only someone of significant status, of ariki descent, of super human qualities, was worthy of Tangaroa's attention in such a manner.

And thus Paikea's status as a tipua was confirmed.

Paikea: He tangata

Paikea was transported safely to shore, landing at Ahuahua, an island in the Bay of Plenty area. He made a slow journey down the eastern coastline in search of a home. Along the way he engaged in relations with several women and there are many along this coastline who can claim descent from Paikea because of these fleeting relationships.

When he arrived at a place which resembled his former home he decided to settle, with his wife Huturangi, the daughter of Te Whironui. He named this place Whāngārā-mai-Tawhiti – Whāngārā from afar, a place name that was also found in Hawaiki. Naming new locations in memory of those in Hawaiki was common practice amongst early Māori ancestors upon their arrival in Aotearoa (Carter 2005).

There Paikea toiled away his days, raising his family, teaching in the house of esoteric learning that he established, Whitireia, until his death. The island that rises from the sea to the right of the bay is said to be the whale that saved his life in a petrified form, and it is in a cave on this island that Paikea was laid to rest.

Paikea's influence on the people of the East Coast was substantial, but more so for the people of Whāngārā. His legendary exploits provide a framework of understanding the spiritual bond between the human and natural worlds, and the potential revealed when nature is respected rather than exploited.

Ancestors of significant influence continue to fulfil guardian roles long after their passing. Tekoteko or koruru are carved figures that grace the top of our whare nui (meeting houses), are one way in which these people are immortalised. A position most commonly afforded to those whose influence is based in Aotearoa.

1 Karakia are not generally translated into English. The following is a recording of the karakia being chanted to help the reader feel the spiritual essence of this karakia: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3tq1FWI53IE>

Paikea sits proudly atop his whale at the apex of the whare nui in Whāngārā, watching carefully over those who reside there.

And thus Paikea's status as a tangata was confirmed.

He koruru koe, koro e – you are a figurehead for us all

The story of Paikea has left an indelible mark on the people of the East Coast. *The Whale Rider* may be considered a mythological fantasy, but to us as Paikea's descendants, at its very core it is a record of our whakapapa. Whakapapa, in its simplest form can be described as the layering of names on a family tree in order of descent. It is a genealogical framework upon which knowledge is situated; it is not of itself 'knowledge,' but the repository of information about the world. Therefore, every narrative that is attached to this framework is instructive, providing guidance and advice on how to overcome adversity.

Paikea as an ariki: *The Whale Rider* deals with issues of male masculinity. Ironically, the narrative is located within an iwi where women are afforded a chiefly status equal to that of males. Many of our senior lines of descent bear female names, many hapū and the majority of our marae are named after women. Koro Paka seems to forget this. In Ngāti Porou, mana and tapu imbued from the atua to those of senior descent do not know gender.

Paikea as a tipua: *The Whale Rider* focuses specifically on one character. Whales feature strongly in many tribal narratives all around the country and there are many other whale riders. But none are afforded legendary tipua status as one sees in Paikea. The changing of Kahutia-te-rangi's name to Paikea reminds us of the debt that we owe to this magnificent creature of the deep. But also serves as a reminder of the power of Tangaroa. The respect we must show this atua when interacting in his domains.

Paikea as a tangata: Paikea existed in a time and place when atua reigned supreme, when ariki lines were fiercely protected and their influence was controlling but necessary for the protection and survival of their people, and when the supernatural abilities of some were highly sought after and went unquestioned. Everything was in balance.

The Whale Rider teaches us of the need to be more deliberate in our actions to protect our environment, our knowledge, and our communities. The time and place that the character Kahu lives in is one characterised by deliberate and strategic government policies aimed at disconnecting Māori from all of these things. Her birth signals a change. She is also Paikea, the ariki, the tipua, the tangata.

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