

Kia ora, gday and welcome to the History of Aotearoa New Zealand, Episode 4: Whakapapa and Oral Tradition. Welcome back! Hopefully you have listened to the episode before this one, which is a dramatic retelling of Kupe and Te Wheke where Kupe discovers Aotearoa. I say that as the reason I am doing this topic now is due to some behind the scenes stuff that happened in relation to that episode. So when I released that episode I decided to pay for an ad on Facebook cause naturally I want the show to grow and get more listeners. I thought that that episode was a good place to do it as it was more exciting and interesting for a wider audience than the history facts we normally talk about that might initially put people off. Although, I'm sure we all enjoy some juicy history facts, that why you're here I hope. Anyway, I was really proud of how that episode came out and when I pushed it further into the void of the internet what came back wasn't entirely expected. To put it simply, I got a reasonable amount of shit for it. I knew this was coming at some point, I know of other history podcasters who have been fairly vocal about their issues with people giving negative feedback due to not telling history the way they want it. This was a bit different though. A number of people disagreed with the fact I called it a myth, implying that it wasn't real. I had always heard the story of Kupe and Te Wheke as being called a myth, the website I got it off, which is run by the Ministry of Education, put the story in their myths and legends section. As it turns out, there are a number of people that don't believe it is a myth, they believe it really happened, or at least that Kupe was a real figure. Now, I do apologise if I offended anyone by calling it a myth, that wasn't my intention, I just wanted to make something fun to try and bring the story to life. Kupe could have potentially been a real person and there is such a thing as a colossal squid so it's not impossible he fought a large cephalopod. In saying that, this is a history podcast and we need to be assessing evidence to determine what is historical fact, by that I mean I personally think the chances of Kupe fighting a giant squid is very slim to none. Giant and colossal squid are deep sea creatures and it is pretty rare that they come to the surface, even rarer that they might try attack a vessel. I don't wish to begrudge anyone who does believe these stories as fact, the same can be said of many religions but for the purposes of this podcast we need to using evidence and analysis as much as possible. So that's what this episode is about, we are going to talk about the oral tradition of Maori and whakapapa, ancestry or genealogy, and how they were used in Maori society and why they might actually be more accurate than you think.

Pre-European colonisation Maori had no written records like the Polynesian ancestors. They had no paper, no letters and that meant everything was passed down through voice. Oral traditions throughout history are often considered useless and unreliable by cultures that do have written records. Celtic druids are probably one of the most famous examples with the Romans thinking that their oral traditions held no weight and would fluctuate from generation to generation or even person to person. Maori were no different, many times stories were looked on as unreliable by Europeans all the way to even the 20th century because they were memorised and passed down orally. However, we find that the reality, like a lot of things in life, is far more complex. You see, these may have been stories with impossible acts and larger than life characters but that didn't make them not history. Stories, rhymes, repetition, poetry and other similar methods were employed to help them be more easily memorised but that shouldn't and doesn't diminish their usefulness or reliability. We also find that that although different iwi might have slightly different variations of the same story or relay whakapapa slightly differently, the broad strokes were always the same and European scholars found that when they took a story from one tribe and told it to another, the second tribe agreed on most of the larger points, even if they disagreed on the details. So why would they bother with all this? Maori of course revere ancestors and people naturally want to be associated with the most prestigious people or groups, since mana was so intrinsic to their

society but it was more than that. Whakapapa kept track of chiefly descent, connection to the Great Fleet, important marriages and fortunes in war which naturally these dictated your relationship with your neighbours but also told you had claim to what. Whakapapa was very often referred to on the marae, the central meeting house used for social gatherings or, in our case, legal disputes because it would determine who had a claim to land, resources or chieftainship. Repetition on the marae also ensured whakapapa and stories didn't change too much, making them even more reliable. It's essentially like Europe during the medieval period, people wanted to show they were related to a king or lord so they could claim they rightfully owned a piece of land, or like many later rulers trying to show they were descended from major figures like Charlemagne or Odin to increase their status.

Just like medieval documents, however, Maori oral tradition wasn't perfect. For example, Maori whakapapa and stories were often interested in people of note like heroes, chiefs and other nobles rather than disgraced individuals, defeated groups or just the general common folk. Again, because people wanted to be associated with the best ancestors or lineages to try increase their mana which results in not a lot of information being passed down to us about those outside that scope. Also similar to European monarchies was people trying to do some leaps of logic or manipulate whakapapa. This was to try make it look like they were related to certain high status individuals, particularly chiefs in an effort to lay claim to a chieftainship or strip of land from a rival. It's an interesting thing that these traditions fall into exactly the same caveats as written records found elsewhere in the world despite the idea that just because they weren't written down they would be like playing a big game of Telephone. Sure things got slightly altered and distorted, that's unavoidable like with any history but since whakapapa was used to handle disputes, it was vitally important that it be accurate, or at least broadly agreed upon by groups in an area as that was essentially their evidence in legal proceedings.

In this way whakapapa was also sacred. Whakapapa-tupuna, arranging ancestors, was mostly restricted to those who were educated in genealogy. This made it difficult for European scholars to try build ancestral trees as these people were reluctant to share their knowledge unless disputes arose and even then they were usually only interested in their own lineages. Europeans in general had a hard time grasping the stories and tales in particular as they were focussed on the narrative. It was, and still is since I fell into this trap, hard for people unfamiliar with what these stories mean to see past Kupe fighting a giant octopus. For Maori, it was more about the names of people, places, geography, the genealogy, that is what was important for both spiritual and practical reasons. Because of this you could more or less have people in different areas tell you the same stories with the same names.

To put this into a real world example, let's take a slight step backwards from Maori landing in New Zealand to talk about the Great Fleet. I will do a dramatic retelling of the Fleet next time but to get you up to speed, the Great Fleet is about seven different waka that left Hawaiki, the Maori ancestral homeland to migrate to Aotearoa. Most Maori today trace their whakapapa back to one of these great waka, although there are other slightly more minor waka that others trace their lineage to but to keep it simple here are the big seven: Tainui, Te Arawa, Mataatua, Kurahaupo, Tokomaru, Takitimu and Aotea. Hopefully I pronounced those mostly correct but I do apologise I messed it up a bit. I did try my best but please let me know and I can correct it in future. Some are said to have

left and arrived in Aotearoa at a similar time with others following close behind although which ones arrived first differs depending on who you ask. Tainui is sometimes described as being the first to arrive in some stories while in others, Te Arawa is first with Tainui being built immediately after the first part of the fleet sets sail. We don't see the stories of the Great Fleet or anything else being written down until the 1830s by people like Edward Shortland, a British doctor and linguist who was going around different villages recording their stories and is where we get a lot of information about Maori oral tradition as well as the Great Fleet. During a land claim hearing in Maketu, Bay of Plenty, Shortland had an elderly priest start at the earliest history of the Te Arawa waka and step by step bring it to the present day. He then took this to other tribes in Tauranga and in the Waikato who were quick to point out any misrepresentations the priest had made but accepted it was generally correct. Again, we see this a lot with other whakapapa when we cross reference them from one iwi to another. Te Arawa and Tainui actually have a bit of interesting history as in most accounts they have some sort of dispute. In one account the two crews argue over a beached whale, in another Te Arawa feel uncomfortable sailing without a priest, so they invite a Tainui priest on board to bless the waka but sail off before he can get back to Tainui. There is also an account of the Tainui crew burning the Te Arawa waka once in Aotearoa, which is then responded to by killing the Tainui chief. We don't see this level of connection between other canoes but it does show that the animosity and hardship which they tried to leave behind in Hawaiki followed them. Although the waka thus far mentioned are somewhat historical, there are others that are thought to be mostly mythical as they brought people with them who became the mountains and features of the New Zealand landscape. The stories about those waka reinforced that idea of whakapapa and its spiritual importance since their ancestors weren't just the land in the sense that they were buried in it, they literally were lakes, rivers and mountains. Takitimu also takes on a slight mythical status as it is the only waka to make it to the South Island and was potentially shipwrecked in Southland becoming the Takitimu mountain range. Either way, scholars think that there likely wasn't a single Great Fleet with each waka being a double canoe carrying ~150 people, as some have suggested. It's probably more likely that multiple smaller fleets over time became single big waka in an effort to more easily remember and pass on that knowledge and tradition to the future.

There is also some mention of the Fleet encountering people who had arrived before them. As mentioned in a previous episode, the chance isn't high that there was a population before the large scale migration by the people that would become Maori. It certainly is possible but thus far no archaeological evidence supports the idea and in fact when assessing the names of these groups, it has been found that they are actually descended from members of the Great Fleet. For example, the tribe Ngati Hotu were found by Ngati Tuwharetoa in Taupo and were thought to be there from before the migration. It turns out though they were actually descended from brother of the captain of the Tainui. Fun fact: Ngati Tuwharetoa trace their whakapapa back to that priest that got shafted on Te Arawa so I guess he made it out of that ordeal in good shape. Anyway, it's important to note that communication in those days was much more limited than today, it was very possible that they had no way of knowing if any group they encountered was from the Fleet or before. Another theory that has been perpetuated, and many of you may have heard it, is that these inhabitants that were already in Aotearoa were the Moriori. I don't want to spend too much time on this as a lot of it is pretty racist, such as using craniometry, the measuring of the skull, which as you can imagine was used to justify all sorts of things, including segregation in other countries. We will focus on the Moriori and where they came from and where they went in their own episode.

Now, I feel like at this point I've left a number of people behind at the point of 'Hawaiki? Maybe he meant Hawaii and that kiwi accent is spitting out consonants to replace the vowels it swallows,' No, I didn't misspeak hypothetical listener, I meant Hawaiki, which obviously isn't labelled on any map. This is because it sort of is a place and sort of isn't. By that I mean there is a spiritual and physical Hawaiki. The spiritual version lies towards the sunset around the west to northwest and is where Maori return upon death. The physical, as we talked about earlier, is the homeland of Maori that they came from to reach New Zealand, which lies around the east to northeast. This difference in direction is due to Hawaiki being associated with ancestry, with one aspect of ancestry being death lying in the west and the other being your ancestral spirit carried inside you from the homeland. This feeling inside ones self was thought to be the energy with which a tohunga could enter a trance or through which children were born. The western comparative would be something like the Holy Spirit in Christianity, filling you up, making you do great deeds or blessing you with healthy children. We do see Hawaiki in other Polynesian traditions but the interesting thing is that it sort of moves. By that I mean, Hawaiki is relative to where you are, like Hawaiki to Maori could be Tahiti, as it has been hypothesised, but Hawaiki to Tahiti could be the Cook Islands and Hawaiki to them could be Tonga and so on. What this meant was that Hawaiki to them was always to the west, the origin of migration and the land of the dead. For Maori though, the origin of migration was to the east and as such there was a distinction made between the spiritual and historical Hawaiki that isn't really seen in other Polynesian cultures.

Once Europeans arrived, they attempted to write all these stories down but as we mentioned, had a bit of a rough time of it and with some just down right dismissing them. Such as Joel Polack, a trader in the 1830s who wrote that some iwi believed a giant bird had dropped an egg into the ocean and four people in an old waka emerged, who landed in New Zealand as the beginning of Maori. Polack was pretty harsh in saying that "their accounts are so much clothed with absurd superstitions as to render such stories wholly useless to the antiquary". At one point some people, including Percy Smith, the founder of the Polynesian Society, tried to put all the whakapapa and stories into one single cohesive history. This was an attempt to make the slightly differing version of Maori history easier to understand for Pakeha, foreigners, and to also use in legal proceedings. So in 1913 one volume was written, followed by another in 1915 titled the Lore of Whare Wananga, The Lore of the House of Learning. As you have probably guessed, it was a shit show. The first volume was on mythological themes with the second on tribal tradition and the book was touted as a master narrative of Maori history and it came close to becoming "the final victory of paper and print over memory and voice". Naturally, the book came under fire from multiple sides, one Bishop Herbert Williams in 1937 argued that the main informant for The Lore, Te Matorohanga was influenced by Christian teachings and that the Te Reo Maori translations were often bad, among other things. He also observed that at least part of Te Matorohanga's scribe's manuscript was chosen from alternate accounts by popular vote, which I can't even begin to get into why that is just a terrible thing to do. In 1925, another scholar, Te Rangi Hiroa, the Vikings of the Sunrise guy, generally accepted the sequence of events in The Lore but worried about the credentials of many stories, more or less saying that it was bollocks cause they had thrown together so many stories and details into one Frankensteined story. But wait, there's more! Further analysis in the 1970s lead further credence to the idea that The Lore was just a terrible piece of history, exposing injections of European knowledge, false attribution of sources, shifting of material to reinforce the narrative, very little of which corresponded with the manuscripts claimed as its sources. Even as recent as 1994, David

Simmons observed that “what words were Te Matorohangas have been lost in the retelling and rewriting.” After all that though, I think Kendrick Smithyman said it best in 1979, in reference to the histographical methods of Percy Smith and his colleagues, “one thing is sure about all this, it is not history”.

If you want to send me feedback, ask a question, suggest a topic or just have a chinwag you can reach me through email at historyaotearoa@gmail.com or Twitter at HistoryAotearoa or Facebook at History Aotearoa New Zealand Podcast. We are also now on Apple Podcasts, Spotify and Stitcher so if you could give us a rating that would be sweet as! Haere tu atu, hoki tu mai. See you next time!

Episode 5 Ending

Tena koe, thank you, for listening to this dramatic retelling of the Great Migration. This one, as you may have noticed doesn't have any sound effects, which I was going to do. The reason I didn't is that the narrative, as you also may have noticed, isn't quite as linear and jumps around a bit more than the Kupe story so I thought it would be a bit jarring to have to change scenes a lot.

Overall, I've really enjoyed this story. My favourite character was easily Ngatoro, the Tainui priest that gets shafted by Tama, captain of Te Arawa which I mentioned last time. He is just such a interesting character, he creates a massive storm to take revenge on Tama, indicating his great power before feeling bad about killing a whole bunch of people cause he was pissed at one guy. Then when he gets a chance, he just climbs a mountain and does a Mufasa on all the land around him but of course, you gotta name everything. I just got this image of him up there pointing to stuff and naming it as his slave whinges that its getting a bit chilly. I thought the part where his sisters somehow swim over was kind of oddly hilarious since it had been this big mission that took weeks and many waka for all these people to sail to Aotearoa but Ngatoro's sisters can just Aquaman their way there in a few minutes... Now before I get some of you writing in about me making jokes about this, I'm not trying to be offensive, its just a bit of fun. We can't always take history too seriously, sometimes is just funny. This story also has a lot more of how the New Zealand landscape came to be, which I thought was really cool too. Anyway,

I'd love to hear what you thought of it, what you liked or thought I could improve! It should be noted that this is one telling of this story and you may have heard it differently. This is by no means a definitive version. Next week we will get off these waka and talk about what Maori were doing to survive once they arrived in an unfamiliar land. We will brush over generally how they lived which will give us a good footing for some more deep dives into various topics. If you want to send me feedback, ask a question, suggest a topic or just have a chinwag you can reach me through email at historyaotearoa@gmail.com or Twitter at HistoryAotearoa or Facebook at History Aotearoa New Zealand Podcast. It would also be great if you could give us a rating on iTunes, special shoutout to the guy in Adelaide who gave me my first five star review! Haere tu atu, hoki tu mai. See you next time!