

## Book Review

## He atua, he tangata: The world of Māori mythology (3rd ed.) by Reed, A.W.

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*He atua, he tangata: The world of Māori mythology* (2021) is the latest, revised edition of Reed's *Treasury of Māori folklore* (1963). The 1963 original is renowned as the first of its kind to document in English the vastness and richness of the Māori world and Māori spiritual/religious belief by compiling different tribal versions of Māori oral tradition into one book.

First revised by highly regarded author Ross Calman (Ngāti Toa, Ngāti Raukawa-ki-te-Tonga, Ngāi Tahu) in *Reed Book of Māori Mythology* (2004), this 2021 version by Calman has been 'modernised' for readers of the 21<sup>st</sup> century and includes more te reo Māori in accordance with Te Taurawhiri i te reo Māori (The Māori Language Commission). Furthermore, where Reed sometimes attempted to combine different tribal accounts of oral history into one story, in this updated version, Calman upholds and identifies the difference in tribal accounts by referencing a range of sources, while still maintaining the essence of the 1963 classic. It is important that the reader understands that this book does not seek to filter out one 'simple' or 'composite' version of Māori oral tradition, as the different tribal accounts do not always align and can often contradict each other. However, as the editor suggests, the different versions cited in the book should be recognised as a combination of components that capture Māori thought.

*He atua, he tangata* will take the reader on an enlightening and thought-provoking journey into te ao Māori (the Māori world) by exploring the depths of Māori cosmology and belief through Māori oral traditions (pūrākau). The earlier chapters feature pūrākau telling the stories about the creation of the universe and the first woman, Māori gods, spiritual dimensions and demi-gods. The later chapters share accounts of supernatural beings, super-human beings, pūrākau of the earth, ocean and sky, the magical arts, concluding with stories about love. At first it is hard to not become overwhelmed by the many names, genealogies (whakapapa) and versions that are cited, however the 14 chapters are purposefully sequenced for a flow of reading where the chapters interlink and tie in together.

As stated by the editor, the oral traditions bestowed in this book give "an insight into the Māori world view and give colour, depth and context to this land in which we live" (p. 11). For kaiako familiar and unfamiliar with te ao Māori (the Māori world) this is important especially when understanding the significance of tikanga which is a consistent component throughout the pūrākau. Kaiako have the opportunity to learn the history of aspects such as tapu, utu, mana, aroha, karakia and whakapapa in order to develop an understanding of their significance in current times.

*Te Whāriki: He Whāriki Mātauranga mō ngā Mokopuna o Aotearoa: Early Childhood Curriculum (Te Whāriki)* (Ministry of Education [MoE], 2017) focuses on place-based education to understand the tikanga of the local context and mātauranga Māori. The different tribal versions of pūrākau, especially the pūrākau widely known in many early childhood centres, highlight the relevance of place-based education, for example, in the story of Ranginui (Sky Father) and Papatūānuku (Earth Mother). It is commonly known that Ranginui and Papatūānuku are the (personified) primal parents, however, some versions tell of Tangaroa (god of the Ocean) being Papatūānuku's first husband and they bore a child. Another tells of Ranginui having many wives who he also bore children. Furthermore, the pūrākau

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illustrate different tribal accounts about well-known atua (Māori gods) as well as bringing to the fore the many female atua and the 'tribal atua' who are unique to different tribes throughout Aotearoa New Zealand. Therefore, as kaiako engaging with te ao Māori, the book motivates us to consider 'whose story we are telling' and whether we are capturing the mana of the pūrākau that belongs to the lands that we reside in.

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**Reference**

Reed, A. W., & Calman, R. (2021). *He atua, he tangata: The world of Māori mythology* (3rd ed.) Oratia Books.