

HENARE KING

## Oranga

The book “The Tail of the Fish” was published in 1968 and written by a Te Aupouri kuia, Matire Kereama (nee: Hoeft) of the far north of Aotearoa, New Zealand. I grew up with this book as my grandmother would read the stories to me at bedtime. Although my comprehension of each story was very vague and unrelatable to my life at that time, today, I find myself totally absorbed by the historical content and knowledge encapsulated in each chapter.

I completed a Masters of Applied Indigenous Knowledge at Te Wananga o Aotearoa in 2017, entitled; Tales of the singing fish: He tangi wairua. I composed twelve waiata (Maori songs) of which ten of the waiata was information extracted from ten chapters of the book. The other two waiata were composed specifically for my people of the Te Rarawa tribe, namely, Ahipara.

After a baby was born, being a male child, his navel or pito was very carefully treated. When it had healed, the boy was given to a grandfather or grandmohter to hold and the elder was handed something speical to eat over the child while it slept. The ceremony was called ‘whakanoa’ or making the baby clean from tapu (prohibited to participate in everyday activity). Sometimes the child was named at this point. A feast was then held to mark the fact that the child had become an individual apart from his mother. Early in the morning the child would be placed and dipped once or twice in the cold running water in the river to help the child develop and become a healthy and strong young adult.

When a son of a leading family grew into manhood, his people looked around among neighbours daughters for a suitable wife for him. The custom was tomo meaning to enter. Once the connection was made the arranged marriage brought families together in complete agreement however sometimes the relationship did not work and if any children which might have come from the marriage would be brought up by the grandparents. When a person died, a tangi or cying ceremony was held. Everybody living in the neighbouring settlements was expected to attend, indeed, no respectful person would stay away. The tangi was usually held in the whare hui or local marae (tribal meeting grounds). The visitors arrived in groups wearing green leaves in their hair or their hats (drooping leaves for mourning).

E kai ana ōku tūpuna  
Whakanoa mai i te tapu  
Atawhaitia i te pito  
Horoi mai i te awa

Ka rere to wairua  
Ka rere to aroha  
Piri mai kia kōtahi mai  
Tomo mai e te hoa

Mate atu hē tētē kura  
Whakaete mai e tētē kura  
Kohukohu ki te rangi  
Ki te whenua e