

Pinepine Te Kura

Pinepine te kura, hau te kura,
Whanake te kura i raro i Awarua;
Ko te kura nui, ko te kura roa,
Ko te kura o tawhiti na Tuhaepo!
Tenei te tira hou, tenei haramai nei;
Ko te Umurangi, na te Whatuiapiti.
Nau mai, e tama, ki te taiao nei,
Ki' whakangungua koe ki te kahikatoa,
Ki te tumatakuru, ki te tara ongaonga;
Nga tairo ra nahau, e Kupe,
I waiho i te ao nei.

Piki ake, kake ake i te toi huarewa,
Te ara o Tawhaki i piki ai ki runga;
I rokohina atu ra Maikuku-makaka,
Hapai o Maui, he waha i pa mai,
'Taku wahine purotu!' 'Taku tane purotu!'
Korua ko te tau, e.

Little Tiny Treasure

*Little tiny treasure, treasure of renown,
The treasure who came from below Awarua;
The noble treasure, the famous treasure,
The treasure from afar off, the treasure of Tuhaepo!
A strange visitor is he, lately arrived here:
He is Te Umurangi, descended from Te Whatuiapiti.
Welcome, O son, welcome to this world of life.
You are to be ritually strengthened with the kahikatoa,
With the tumatakuru and the taraongaonga;
These were the thorny obstructions that you, O Kupe,
Bequeathed unto this world.*

*Climb up, ascend by the suspended way,
The pathway of Tawhaki when he ascended on high,
And there found Maikuku-makaka,
Attended by Hapai of Maui, and greetings were uttered:
'My beautiful lady!' 'My handsome man!'
A tribute for you two, O loved ones.*

Background

'PINEPINE TE KURA' is one of the famous songs of Ngati Kahungunu, of Heretaunga (Hawkes Bay). Pinepine te kura' is an oriori. Oriori are chants composed for young children, usually of noble birth. They typically contain complex references to the child's kinship connections, to recent and ancient history, and to myths and gods. Many of these references are now very difficult to understand.

The song is addressed to Te Umurangi, the 'little tiny treasure' who is descended from Te Whatuiapiti, a great Ngati Kahungunu chief and warrior. (A famous story concerning Te Whatuiapiti is given on page 16, issue no. 47 of 'Te Ao Hou'.) Tawhaki is the demi-god who climbed up a vine to the heavens. Apa are gods, the messengers of heaven. The reference to witchcraft recalls the tribal quarrels at Turanganui (the Gisborne district) which led Ngati Kahungunu to migrate south to Heretaunga (Hawkes Bay).