

# Te Arikinui Te Atairangikaahu: E Tala Mei Tonga Ki Tokelau

Okusitino Māhina

A poem composed in remembrance of the Māori Queen, Te Arikinui Te Atairangikaahu, with translations into Māori and English. The poem belongs in the Tongan genre ta`anga tangilaulau, ta`anga tengihia or ta`anga tutulu, “poetry of weeping”. The late Queen Salote of Tonga, considered the most famous contemporary poet that Tonga has ever produced, was responsible for refining this literary genre, formally naming it “ta`anga tutulu” (‘tutulu’ being the honorific word for crying or weeping). Specifically, all these poetic forms are concerned with the mourning of death or of the dead. In fact, she wrote several ‘tutulu’ poems, such as the “Tutulu `a `Ene `Afio he Pekia `a Fusipala” (“Weeping of Her Majesty on the Death of Fusipala”), Fusipala being her younger half-sister.

The poem, translated “Te Arikinui Te Atairangikaahu: Telling the North from the South”, was composed in deep mourning of the death of the much-beloved, well-respected Māori Queen (lines 8-11). Symbolically, the poem makes reference to the extremely sad public pronouncement of her death (lines 4 & 7), which emanated from Aotearoa and reaching Tonga (line 6; see sub-title).

With symbolism, the poem proceeds to celebrate her unique royal trappings and great social achievements as an exceptional Māori heroine (lines 12-24), representing her very own people's common struggle for freedom (lines 25 & 32). A permanent way of life, this ongoing spirit of freedom was originated amongst such great Māori heroes as Te Wherowhero, enumerated through the enduring landscape movement of the Māori as truly a great people (The grand Ranginui-Papatuanuku origin myth attests to this state of greatness, which my

most favourite of the Māori myths and I have written a long poem about it) (lines 25-32).

It also talks about the persistent cultural and historical inter-linkages between Aotearoa and Tonga, the so-called Friendly Isles, which can be traced back in time and space to antiquity (lines 6 & 35). It also alludes to the inevitability of death, vested in the hands of women (lines 36 & 37), transforming the ‘mortal’ body by leaving the immortal vanua, fonua or whenua as the indestructible, eternal soul (lines 38-40).

Fatu `e `Okusitino Māhina ko e tengihia mo e fakamanatu `o e hala `a e Kuini `ofeina mo faka`apa`apa`ia `o e kāinga Māori, Te Arikinui Te Atairangikaahu, Aotearoa Nu`usila, `Ākosi, 2006 `o e ta`u.

1. Ne u nofo `ou mūnoa pē au  
`Ikai `apē ha`ate fakakaukau  
Takamilo e tā mo hono ta`au  
Ka e fakafokifā kuo pā e peau
5. Pea mahe`a he `ea `o e ngalu  
Ke tala mei Tonga ki Tokelau  
Kuo fasi tanunu pea loka tau  
He tu`unga ia `ete tangi laulau  
Ngaruawahia he `api kuo lala
10. Turangawaewae e kuo lauta  
Ke tangi lau`aitu mo sī fatafata  
He kuo `auhia `a e taha`imaka  
`A e Pounamu ko e tama`imata  
Fetapaki hono huelo tupu`a
15. `O maamaloa `i loto Aotearoa  
Pea hulungia `i he `ulu fonua  
Pohutukawa ne fisi pea moto  
`O to`ulu mo matala he Waikato  
Hono uini hauhau mokomoko
20. Ne afuhi hono hulufe laumomo  
`E Tainui mo e `api ko Turongo  
Ho`o fanautama ko e tāongapō  
Ko e fai`anga ia `o e tautoko  
Muka `a `ofa `i he `etau nonofo
25. `A e Kingitanga ia kuo he`aki  
Ko e tala kuo fai hono lekesi  
Kavei he feilaulau faimateaki  
Te Wherowhero ne ne matua`i  
Ko e Maui Kisikisi `o e `aho ni
30. `A e fakapōpula ia na`a ne tau`i  
Mo e fakapo`uli ne fakafepaki`i  
Ko e tau`atāina `ene tu`uholoaki  
Ko e ngātanga ia si`ete tālave  
Pe`i tōfā koe ka kuo malave
35. Ka u kalo ange au ki Felenite  
Ko mate tofu ia mo `ene pule  
Kātoi `i he `aofinima `o fafine  
He nofo ni ko e nunu mo vete  
Tu`uloa `a whenua ko e laumālie
40. Hu`i teunga pē tui teunga pē

## Te Arikini Te Atairangikaahu: Telling the North from the South

Literal translation into English, by Okusitino Māhina, in deep mourning and sincere remembrance of the death of the dearly beloved Māori Queen, Te Arikini Te Atairangikaahu, Aotearoa New Zealand, August, 2006.

1. Carefree and unaware I stay  
And never was there thought  
Of the complex cycle of time  
Suddenly a big wave has crashed
5. The airwaves sounded the alarm  
Telling the North from the South  
Swells crashing through rough seas  
The cause of my crying in words  
Dearest Ngaruawahia is deserted
10. Yet, Turangawaewae is crowded  
To weep loudly beating one's breast  
The one and only stone washed away  
The Pounamu, the most precious
15. Its age-old rays that glitter  
Shining in the midst of Aotearoa  
Flashing through to distant lands  
The Pohutukawa is blossoming  
It branches out and is flowering
20. Nourished by the cool morning dews  
Spraying the fine-leaf fern shrubs  
Dearly beloved Tainui and Turongo  
The child of your birth, a tāongapō  
Interweaving, uniting us as tautoko
25. Thro' love the motto of our living  
Of the Kingitanga that's mentioned  
A tradition of such refinement  
Knotted through great sacrifice  
Led by Te Wherowhero the agitator
30. The Maui Kisikisi of our own time  
Who stood up against oppression  
Anti ignorance he fought it out  
Making way for freedom to endure  
Now that I have korero-ed my tangi
35. Let me retreat to the Friendly Isles  
Death's freely acting and inevitable  
Rightfully invested in women's hands  
Life condenses here and rarefies there  
Yet, whenua is the ever-lasting soul
40. With trappings worn on and off

## Te Arikinui Te Atairangikaahu: Telling the North from the South

Metamorphic translation from Tongan to English by Manase Lua

1. I ponder from the deep solace of space  
lost in the beating of time, point and place  
lo and behold comes the wind and the waves  
crashing with force to astound and amaze
5. carried aloft by a foam gusted breath  
from South to North swells a black tide of  
death  
Te Arikinui in casket of Toa  
in grief they cry out to the atua  
Ngaruawahia the house of the fallen
10. Turangawaewae answers the calling  
the beating of breasts and tears from sore  
eyes  
last parting gifts and the children's soft cries  
given with love and sincere aroha  
to one who gave light both near and afar
15. her mana shines even now as before  
pounamu eyes of a wahine toa  
like the blood bloom of pohutukawa  
Tainui waka her strength and mana  
yet like a cool breeze she summoned them  
all
20. "stand with me!" she called "stand straight  
and stand tall!"  
summon the hosts with gnarled tokotoko  
the chosen of Hine-nui-te-po  
call for all waka of Aotearoa  
Waikato wants peace not settling old scores
25. to strengthen tomorrows Kingitanga  
the word spreads forth from whanga to  
whanga  
whomever shall wear this garland of kings  
the hope of Te Wherowhero it brings  
a burden worthy of Maui to bear
30. won with valorous endeavour and care  
the darkness dispelled with unity nigh  
"freedom is staying together!" the cry  
and on this bold note I gift you these birds  
to ease the long road with fluttering words
35. caught on the mounds of the Friendly islands  
captured for chiefs from far as the highlands  
kingly royal lines cross the ocean in grief  
but her earthly form will find sweet relief  
on chiefly soil will her head rest in lieu
40. her spirit alight for me and for you.

## Te Arikinui Te Atairangikaahu Whakaatu ana mai te Raki ki te Tonga.

Metamorphic translation to Māori by Te Aouru Biddle, Ngati Pikiāo and Vicki Rangī, Tuhoe

1. Kei roto au i te māhorahora me te ware  
Kore rawa he whakaaro  
Mo te uauatanga o te huringa ao.  
Mea rawa ake kua tuki he ngaru nunui
5. I whakaaraarahia e te karehau  
Mai i te Raki ki te Tonga, ka whaakiihia.  
E tuki nei te āmai i te moana hīngarungaru  
Te take o waku kupu hotuhotu.  
Kua whakarērea a Ngaruawaahia
10. Engari te minenga, kei Turangawaewae  
Ki te tangi tīwerawera e kaha mamae nei te  
uma.  
Te kōhatu i horoia atu, ko tana kotahi  
Te kōhatu tino marihi, te Pounamu
15. E kōritorito nei ana hihi tawhito  
E piataata nei i te ngākau o Aotearoa  
Kōpura ana ki ngā whenua tawhiti.  
E puāwai nei te Pōhutukawa  
Ka toro atu, ka whaipua
20. Ka whaangaia e ngā tomairangi hauangi  
Rere ana te rehu runga rau aruhe.  
Ngā tau o taku ate, Tainui, Turongo  
Ka whanau tō tamaiti, he taongapō  
Hei whakakapiti ka paihere hei tautoko ia  
tatou.
25. Ko te aroha hei pepeha i te oranga  
O ngā whakaaturanga ā-Kingitanga  
He tīkanga-a-iwi tino tōiretanga  
Kua pūtikia i roto i te raupanga hirahira.  
I arahina e Te Wherowhero te kaiwhakaueue
30. Te Maui Tikitiki o tenei wā  
I tū maia ki ngā whakawhiunga  
Ngā kūwaretanga i whawhaitia e ia  
Kia tuwhera ai te rangatiratanga ka matatū.  
Kua korerotia nei taku tangi
35. Tukuna au kia hoki ki ngā Moutere Hoahoa.  
Ko te Mate he mahinga tuku, he heipu  
Ka tika te tapae ki ngā ringa o ngā wāhine  
Ka whakapotoa te oranga i konei i kora  
He oi ko te whenua te wairua pumau tonu
40. Ko ngā kahu whakahira hei mau hei wete.

Na Okusitino Māhina i tito.

**Okusitino Mahina** holds a PhD degree in Pacific history from the Australian National University in Canberra Australia. Dr Mahina has taught at 'Atenisi University in Tonga and Massey University - Albany campus in Auckland for many years. He now lectures in Pacific political economy and Pacific arts in Anthropology at the University of Auckland. Dr Mahina has published a couple of books and co-edited several others amongst a number of journal articles and book chapters on a range of interdisciplinary topics, including poetry in the Tongan language. His research interests, inter alia, include time and space, development and globalisation, transcultural psychology and transcultural aesthetics.

## Translations

**Te Aouru Biddle** has tribal affiliations to Te Arawa and Ngāti Pīkiao. A speaker of Te Reo, she has had acted as a translator for the Māori Television Service and had a successful career as an educator and Principal for over 40 years.

**Vicky Te Puhi-o-Te Arawa Rangi** is affiliated to Tuhoē and Te Aitanga-a Hauiti. Vicky is a native speaker of Te Reo and has been an advisor and translator for the Māori Television Service since its launch in 2003.

**Manase Lua** was born on Tongatapu and migrated to New Zealand in 1974. He has lived in South Auckland for most of his life. He has worked for almost ten years in the public service with the Ministry of Pacific Island Affairs and in his current capacity as a Project Manager in the Disability Services Directorate of the Ministry of Health.