

Background

This karakia comes from the story of the Horouta canoe, one of the ancestral canoes which belonged to the great Polynesian explorer Toi. Kahukura from Hawaiki came to visit Toi and brought him some kumara. Toi gave him his canoe to go and fetch some kumara from Hawaiki. This is the prayer that was said to give him safe passage.

Hau toto, hau toto,
Ko Tu, hekea ana,
Ko Rongo, hekea ana
Ko te ngahau o Tu,
Utaina taku kawa nei,
He kawa tua-maunga,
Ka wiwini, ka wawana,
Tara pata tu ki te rangi,
Au e ki,
Whano, whana,
Hara mai te toki,
Hauma, Hui e Taiki e!

English translation

Ask the gods that the sounding waves,
the breaking waves of the ocean,
and of the great gales,
should be calmed.
That the gods should cause the canoe
to be light in order that it might be swift.