

Book review



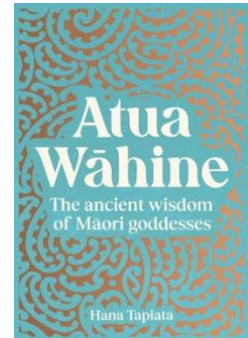
Atua Wāhine: The ancient wisdom of Māori goddesses

Author: Tapiata, Hana.

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This book is presented as an offering, a guide to connect us with ancestral knowledge and a prompt to encourage us to understand ourselves, and our world better. The book is both a personal reflection on the author's relationship with atua wāhine and a workbook for the reader to consider ways that the messages of pūrākau may speak to us.

By increasing our awareness of atua wāhine, Tapiata is not only providing a guide to deeper self-knowledge but also attempting to redress the influence of colonisation and patriarchal beliefs. Her personal anecdotes, embedded in her everyday life highlight her connection to the atua wāhine, and encourage us to do the same. She chronicles the pūrākau of 17 atua wāhine, recognising that each of their stories may hold a significant message for us. Each chapter concludes with a wānanga section: a set of exercises that encourage reflection and action.

The book recognises the influence of stories and acknowledges that the stories that we engage with can have a profound impact upon us. Especially powerful is the book's move away from the Western notion of individuality; instead, it acknowledges that everything, ourselves included, has a whakapapa and that we are inextricably connected to each other and the natural world.

Her deeply personal response to the pūrākau is offered as a platform for readers to form their own interpretation and meaning. By gaining an understanding of atua wāhine, we in turn gain an understanding of ourselves. This book is beautifully presented and very accessible. It would be useful for anyone seeking a framework for reflection based on the wisdom and knowledge of te ao Māori.

Review by Kirsten Edie, School Counsellor

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