

* Death dance on beach at Ohope

General Myths of C.K.S.
Pioneer Military Stories - General
By Kōtare

Green hills form the pleasant background to Ohope Beach, each one of them crowned with the fretted earthworks of long-deserted and forgotten pa-sites.

Time was, of course, when each of them pulsed with life and the beach below echoed happily with the shout and laughter of the "tamariki" (children) as they played or tumbled happily in the surf. One of these hill-pa sites provides the startling story of today's issue, and is probably one of the strangest to emerge from our versatile Maori history.

By genealogical computation, the incident occurred a bare 200 years ago, and details are preserved in the haka and song of the chief actor, a shrewd old tohunga-chief named Te Rupe.

Visitors may see his pa, which is situated on a central hill directly above the Presbyterian Church and synod buildings. It is in a good state of preservation and well worth the climb to the top for the glorious view it affords of the giant curve of the Bay. Te Rupe had the place well fortified with three separate lines of stockades. He belonged to the Whakatohea tribe of Opotiki who, incidentally, regarded Ohope and Ohiwa as their own. He had no immediate enemies, but a long-standing blood-feud existed between him and the mountain-dwelling Tuhoe tribe of the Urewera.

However this ancient grudge was forgotten in the pleasant days at Ohope,

where sea-food was plentiful and life easy. Te Rupe was lulled into a sense of false security.

But the Tuhoe had not forgotten. When the nights were longest and darkest, they marched their braves, and selecting a 100 of the toughest marched through the blackness toward Ohope.

They reached the sleeping pa of Te Rupe just as dawn was breaking and decided to attack at once. With savage cries they surged over the defences of the unguarded pa. The unfortunate inhabitants were practically butchered in their sleep.

Only one person was saved from the massacre. It was Te Rupe. Glowering and defiant he was led down to the beach in triumph. Well he knew that he was reserved for some diabolical fate which his captors had planned for him. And yet as he surveyed his position, he surged with rage and a fierce desire for vengeance.

Was he not a Tohunga, skilled in mysticism, hypnotism and the laws of the occult. The sun was up when Te Rupe, standing on the

sands and ringed by his fierce tattooed captors, suddenly spoke.

"I know your design," he said. "I will be killed in some way of your own. I do not wish to live, but do not slay me as a slave or a dog. Give me my mere pounamu (greenstone club) and let me sing the glories of my ancestors, and then kill me in the midst of my song." So they tossed the old man his favourite weapon, and straight-way he started a



dance that held them fascinated.

Round and round he circled singing the story of Whakatohea which is still preserved in full.

He told of the manner in which they had crushed their enemies. How when one member went down, there was always another totake his place. They were unbeatable.

The Tuhoe stared in admiration, swaying with the rhythm of the dirge, and marvelling at the agile old man who had now captured their entire attention.

Suddenly, changing his words, old Te Rupe addressed his captors personally. Into his voice crept a note of authority. — no. Rather they were his. He darted from one to the other fixing them with his eyes.

"Now, you are all my fish, caught in my net, and unable to move. Your hands are helpless and cannot grip your weapons. They fall to the sands," the old tohunga intoned. "Now you too, fall backwards to the ground."

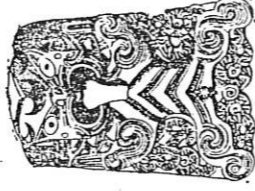
Every word he spoke had its effect. In a fixed hypnotic state, the bravest of the mountain tribe fell flat on their backs.

Then came Te Rupe's vengeance.

His wild song concluded with 100 "Ki, ki — aue!" as he broke the skulls of his helpless enemies one by one as they lay in a ring about him.

The Maori law of utu had been fully met. One man had slain 100 murders of his people.

Te Rupe walked sadly off to Opotiki and joined his people, but his pa since then has been forever tapu.



MAORI GET HYPNOTISED AND SLEW 100 WARRIORS

A story of Te Rupe, paramount chief and tohunga of the Whakatohea, was told by Mr C. Kinusley-Smith, Maori historian, of Whakatohea, at a recent tea meeting of Opo-tiki Rotary. He is a fine raconteur and brought the story to life.

In the days of Te Rupe the Whakatohea was very powerful and its authority extended beyond Ohiwa harbour and to Ohope, where it controlled the beach and surrounding hills. A powerfully defended pa on an elevated site commanded a view of the whole beach.

Members of the Tuhoe objected to this control of the seafood and decided to attack this pa, sent the customary message of warning to its defenders. The sentries who had watched all summer were deterred by the winter cold and left the pa by night open to attack.

However, 100 Tuhoe, marching by night around the harbour, arrived at the pa just before dawn and killed its 230 inhabitants, receiving a ceremonial death for Te Rupe, whom they took prisoner.

Taken to the beach he asked to be allowed to perform the genealogical dance of his people before being put to death. This was granted and also his request to hold his pounamu during the dance.

For four hours he danced in the circle of his captors, exerting his special powers until they became hypnotised and dropped their weapons as he commanded. One by one he struck them with his pounamu until all were dead.

The Rupe then swam the mouth of the harbour and walked to Opo-tiki, arriving exhausted. His people would not believe it when he told them he had slain 100, but while the weary chief slept a large number of them went to Ohope. There they found the 100 dead Tuhoe lying in a circle on the beach and their 230 tribespeople lifeless in the pa.