

Ancient Maori History

Recollections of a Rambler

By Hare Hongi

TAMATEA-NUI AND KAHU-HUNU-IUNU.

Historical Kaitiaki. In both Maori and Pakeha aspects. When its Maori acceptable history comes to be written, as a basis for its Pakeha history, something very like what is here contained ought to find an honoured place in it. Need I add, that Kaitiaki, is well-entitled to have written history—all of its own!

Search all acceptable Maori history and it were difficult indeed to find a more celebrated father and son, than that presented in the following persons of Tamatea-nui and his Kaitiaki-born son, Kahu-hunuhunu. They belong to a period of 20 generations ago (from 1865.) As seems proper in the cases of some great men, there are conflicting claims as to the birthplace of Tamatea-nui. Both, Muri-whenua (North Cape), and Tauranga (East Coast) claim that great honour. As a proof that he was born at the North Cape the Northlanders aver that it was there where he was circumcised in accordance with an ancient custom, in the cases of those of high-born lineage; and from which circumstance he received his second name of Tamateare-i-haea, or Tamatea-the-circumcised. As I have never heard that statement disputed, the North Cape apparently holds the floor, on the point. He is known by this second name, throughout New Zealand. It is tradition that his father landed at Rangiaohia (Doubtless Bay) in a canoe named the Takitimu, which there came to grief, and it was turned into a sea-rock, which is visible to this day. Be that as it may.

It appears certain that it was at Muriwhenua (North Cape) that Tamatea-nui married his wife, Te Kura (aunt of the high and notable chief. Tohe who gave the name to Whaaro (Ninety-mile-Bench); who was the daughter of Nga Manu and Pai-mihia, descendants of those much earlier ancestors, Tuhouhia and Mauwhena, themselves descendants of the original and aboriginal ancestor. Tuputupu-whenua. Tuhouhia and Mauwhenua lived and died at Taurora (inland Hokianga), and were there buried on the little islet Motu-wharangi, which so beautifully adorns and graces the Kereru lakelet. So it was known to our elders as: The Casket, or, Mausoleum of Mauwhena ("Te Pouwaka a Mauwhena). Now we can get on.

Having married his wife, Te Kura, Tamatea-nui took her to the mainland to feast on the wild pigeons of Takahue, which he had procured for her in quantities. They then lived at O-Rongo-tea (Now, Kaitiaki) in the pa named, Tinotino; and it was there where the boy, Kahu-hunuhunu was born.

When his navel (piti) dropped off, Tamatea-nui took it aside and buried it in the earth, together with three sacred pebbles (whatu-kura), as an Iho-whenua, (Sacred binding link, between man and land.) Jealous of their local rights, the Northlanders regarded that act as a most high-handed one on the part of Tamatea. Nor was that softened by the fact that Tamatea had surrounded himself with the most venturesome and turbulent spirits amongst the young men of Ngata-Te-Awa; that time-honoured ancestral name which now became highly abnoxious.

This section of the old Northlanders had built aggressive pas at Whangape, Herekino, Ahipara, O-Rongotea (Kaitiaki), Rangauu, Hukatere, Oruru, and Rangiaohia, (to which later they were quite welcome). With this they had the whole of that part of the country in a state of constant alarm and turmoil for they planned to get the mana and land rights over the whole district. Such was the state of affairs when Tamatea, quite inadvertently, and in accordance with ancient custom, buried that iho-whenua. And it is interesting to record that that act originated the name, Kai-tai-ia; which has quite superseded the ancient name of O-Rongo-tea (Bright news; Glad tidings). For the act directly associated itself with the pigeons of Takahue which since the advent of Tamatea, had been slaughtered ("taia") in their abundance to provide bird food (kai). And so Kai-tai-ia. The local chiefs at once set up a system of forcible ejection (riri-pei) of the Ngati-Te-Awa section; without, however, interfering with Tamatea. We may now get on with our story.

In the meantime Tamatea had had a splendid sea-going canoe built at Whangaroa, and there with 70 picked men, he embarked in it, bound for Tauranga (East Coast). In order to dispose of him and to be left free to treat of his Kaitiaki-born son, Kahu-hunuhunu, we will give to him this paragraph and

show how (Tamarereti expected) he became the most famous navigator of purely Maori history. From Tauranga, Tamatea sailed south on a project of circumnavigating the Nuku-roa (North and South Islands of New Zealand). At times with a few companions he walked, sending the canoe forward, from bay to bay. In that way he reached Te Whanganui-a-Tara (now Wellington harbour). He then crossed Raukawa (Cook Strait), and reaching the East Coast of the South Island, proceeded southwards in the same way, that is, partly by walking, and partly canoeing. Arriving at Murihiku (compare Muriwhenua), he turned westwards and coasted down its west coast. For he found that owing to its roughness and steepness it was impossible to walk any considerable portions of it. On reaching its Arapaoa end (Cape Farewell), he steered a straight course for Wangui, where he stayed awhile. He then proceeded north, passing the Waikato and Kaipara Heads, and called in at Hokianga. From there he sailed along rounded the North Cape, and returned to his starting point, Tauranga. He had circumnavigated the Nukuroa. We are told that it is 1000 miles in length. To circumnavigate its capes and headlands one would need to cover some 3-000 miles A bold and hazardous undertaking. From that splendid accomplishment he got his third and fourth names, and of these his descendants are particularly proud: Tamatea-pokaiwhenua and Tamatea-pokia-moana (or Tamatea who circled the mainlands; and Tamatea who circumnavigated the oceans). I have already indicated that Tamatea was and is well-known through out both Islands. Many coastal spots and places of the interior, visited by the indomitable explorer, are named to commemorate him. But it is for the Southlanders to crown all by naming their towering and mighty, eternally snow-capped mountain range after his canoe, "Takitimu Pae-Maunga" (Takitimu Mountain Range). Surely a monument to a renowned ancestor, which is more enduring than brass! Tauranga has, however, the unqualified honour of being—of all the Nukuroa—his favoured spot. So there we may now leave that father, and follow the career of his equally famous son, the Kaitiaki-born—

KAHU-HUNUHUNU.

So, the boy, Kahu, grew up at Kaitiaki (O-Rongotea). Referring again to the origin and significance of this name of Food-Abundance. There were the innumerable birds of Takahue, the wild duck (parera) and eels of Lake Tangouge, which in their seasons were trapped in numbers by means of those scientifically-made canals. There was an unlimited supply of fish in the Rangauu Bay, including the much-prized edible shark (kapeta), which were taken in thousands. Then here were the giant bivalves (toheroa) in their broad fields of Whaaro (Ninety Mile Bench), and there were the kumara, uwhi, taro and hue (gourd) plantations, which extended from the mouth of the Awani river, through the Kaitiaki valley and all along to Paamapurua, around and below which the very largest cultivations thrived. Truly, there was "Food Abundance" (Kai-tai-ia), and Kaitiaki people literally lived on the fat of the land.

It was amongst these surroundings that the lad Kahu matured. At a very early age he appeared to have taken a leading part in advising and managing systematic operations, both on land and at sea. For, as a young man, it was said of him: Kahuhunu is an industrious man, and one who knows how to manage works, both on land and at sea: ("Ko Kahuhunu he tangata ahuhenua; mohio ki te whakahaere i nga mahi o uta, me o te tai"). The works on land including the ordering and building of village-houses, on a system, attending to cultivations, with a special regard for their proper irrigation and drainage; bird-snaring and spearing appointments; an encouragement of the arts of carving, tattooing, weaving, and canoe-making; while those of the sea were, of course, the management of canoes, and a study of the seasonable times for taking the best fish and shell fish.

The following particular description is given of him: Kahuhunu was a man of amiable qualities. He was never known to take part in a quarrel, much less a battle. He was very tall, and he wore his hair long. This was drawn up to form a top-knot (Kou, Putiki).

MARRIAGE

When quite a young man, Kahu married his first cousin, Hinetaipu. She was a daughter of Te Ra, the senior of

his aunt, Te Kura. There were soon three children of the union, namely, Tamatoa-iti Haruatai, and Poupoto. Yet, and notwithstanding his aversion to quarrelling, fate willed that he should live, more or less, with that Ngati-te-Awa section which was being forced off the mainland, into the infertile swamps and sandhills further north. And, it is said that: Their canoes covered the waters of Rangaunu, and were to be seen by after generations, around the Bay, decaying in dry rot, to dust (popo iho; popo iho).

Pressed further and further north, they conceived of—inforce—opening a canal from Awauni to Kaitaia, which, on a high spring tide, would carry up a fleet of warrior-filled canoes; and so regain a mainland footing. They invited the genius of Kahu to superintend that work. That, Kahu agreed to do, from a pride in its engineering difficulties; rather than from any sympathy in their war-like intention. But, as the work proceeded, the workers not only encountered timber, but the whole trunks of forest trees. Those played havoc with their digging tools, which were made of Mai; probably the hardest of New Zealand woods. That, and the forcible ejection pressure together, caused them to reluctantly abandon the project. (As a boy, I explored the vestiges of that canal work. The lapse of intervening generations, and the annual sturdy growth and decay of flax and raupo, had largely closed its water-filled outlines. But, there it was. The aim apparently was to tap the river at a point below Kaitaia (where we built that lower bridge).

Now fully grown to man's estate Kahu began that roaming life, which he continued until well past middle age. Telling his wife of his intention to at once leave for Tauranga, in the south he pressed noses and bade her farewell.

"But, you will come back to your children," wailed his wife.

"There are others, many; was his cryptic reply. No truer words were ever spoken.

TAURANGA

Having decided to travel by foot, with a few companions, Kahu started south. He knew the lay of the land, as well as if he had a map with him. But even so, the walking was toilsome enough. There was then no main road, and it was only occasionally that a narrow path was chanced upon, leading to the south. His party was hospitably detained at the various pa-villages on the way, and eventually reached Tauranga. There Kahu had a most affecting meeting with his father, Tamatea, whom he had not seen since infancy.

Tauranga with its Ngati-Rangi (Ngati-Awa) people appears to have been a very considerable place in those far-off days of Kahu. His father complimented him on his resolution to travel southward, to view the lands of his country and their tribes. Tama also strove to induce Kahu to accompany him on a major expedition. But Kahu plainly told him that far-distant and prolonged ex-

peditions had no appeal for him. He intended to coast along southward by very easy stages from bay to bay. With that he left Tauranga and having made a short stay at Te Awa-a-te-atau (the river of the god Awanui-a-rangi), he journeyed on to Kohi's Kapu-te-ranga.

WHAKATANE

Here was the last pa of his Ngati-Awa ancestor, Toi, and here he was cordially welcomed by kindred of his own grandrater, Rongokako, and took unto himself a wife. Meanwhile our erst Kaitaia-born Kahu, son of a notable father, was rapidly gaining a peculiar reputation of his own, for the suddenness in which he got straggling and disorderly villages, huts, canoes and cultivations, put into the most excellent order. It became an axiom how the young men rose to execute his will. And it is these things which afford glimpses of the Kahu of those days, who was climbing the ladder of fame to the spectacular career which he left behind him. The soul of industry himself he quickly inculcated that in others. He was an intense advocate of that fatherly and motherly advice to their matured sons and daughters, which has passed into proverbs. The man who procures and cultivates foods, marry him; the man who sits about the house, thump his noddle. (Or, Tane i te mahi kai, moea; tane i te noho-whare kurua te takataka): Wahine i te ringaringa, wawae ka kama moea; wahine i te ngutungutu, whakarerera atu). The maid who is nimble with fingers and feet, marry her; the maiden who is nimble with lips, leave her to herself).

OPOTIKI

From Whakatane Kahu went on to Opotiki and there he appears to have remained long enough to take unto himself another wife. With the East Cape, as his objective, he then moved along to Whare-Kahika (Hick's Bay). This old series of villages rested about the modern Hick's Bay, just north of the East Cape. But Kahu wanted to round the East Cape and to view the country from there, far southward. So he again went on and made his next short stay in the vicinity of Turangaiti.

The Tolaga Bay of Captain Cook. This, at the time, appears to have been a place of minor importance. So, having rested, Kahu made the short journey to Whangara.

Here (just south of Gable End Foreland), there was a very considerable settlement of people. And here, Kahu was shown, firmly imbedded in a rock, the sacred footprint of his grandfather, Rongokako ("Te Tapuwae-o-Rongokako"). Its fellow is some 30 miles distant. Truly, they took giant strides in those days! Given a reputation for quick and distant travelling, and we have the materials for those wonderful stories—in so many lands—of "giant strides and seven-leagued boots."

It was about this important district and coast that Kahu spent most of the years of his middle age. He made short

journeys to Ahuriri (Napier inlet), and on to Heretaunga (Hastings). But he always returned to Whangara. He made that his permanent (for him) home, until attracted by the celebrity of the young chieftainess, Rongomai Wahine.

MAHIA

Now better known as the Mahia Peninsula, the pity of this change of name is that not only is Nuku-tau-rua the original, proper and descriptive name, and the name of its, one-time, high chief, but it is the exact interpretation of the term, peninsula, Nuku-tau-rua.

It was here, then, at Tawapata (which overlooks Portland Island) that Kahungunu (as the southerners prefer it) espoused Rongomai Wahine, who became not only his final, but the most celebrated of his many wives, his wife-in-chief. She bore him a large family, and it was with her that he lived and ended a long life by dying of old age on the impregnable pa of Maunga-akahia. This stands half-way along and on the north side of the peninsula. Nearby I was shown a clearly defined footprint. It is the other sacred footprint of his grandfather, Rongokako, deeply impressed in a beach terrace of papa rock.

AND THEN—WAR!

It is passing strange that he himself, his father and his grandfather, being all for peace, the fates willed that his old age should be embittered by the martial ardour of his many sons and grandsons. Those carried on sanguinary strife. Not against their neighbours only, but amongst themselves. They pushed and fought their way southward, leaving to posterity a story teeming with romance, chivalry and battle. With heroes and heroines (hine-pare) to the full. As the Ngati-Kahungunu tribe, their long drive southward did not even end at the Wairarapa lake (near Wellington). Some descendants of Kahu, Tahuhumua and Tahuhupoke, crossed over to the South Island, and there as the Ngai-Tahu, became the leading modern tribe of that island.

VALEDICTORY—HAERE RA!

It is now exactly 12 months since I spent a long and pleasant holiday with my dear old friend, and the dear old friend of Timi Kara, Mr. G. O. Ormond (Te Omona), at his beautiful and charming homestead on the peninsula. There we were in the bosom of his family of stalwart half-casts, rep. foot-balls, rifle shots and what not. If all had lived 17 of them would have graced our family board. There is something salubrious about that peninsular climate.

Came the day when with a pair of hucks guaranteed to transport two old men in safety, we started off to visit and to scale the pa whereon Kahu had breathed his last. At the end of a long ride and having crossed casual streams and tidal-inlets, we reached the pa.

From a broad and splendid flat, just above the beach level, the wide face of

the pa, Maunga-akahia, towers sheer up its 800 feet. We rode to the far end of this and, dismounting, led our horses up a steep slope, half-way to the summit. There we had to tether them and climb, at times on all-fours, to the top. What a magnificent view, seaward! Past Gisborne, Whangara and Tokomaru Bay, to the East Cape. Landward, I could see that the pa was a detached fragment of the terrace, which stretched away, uniformly, to the homestead. There had been a subsidence, which had however, left the pa site standing at the original terrace-level.

The pa summit, long and narrow, is very nearly level. We stepped it and figured that its area was nearly and a half, quite commodious enough.

And it was here that Kahu-Hunuhunu had died! I was very deeply impressed; not alone for a moving historical sense, but, for the more intimate and personal sense that, as a boy of twelve I had stood on that Kaitaia pa, where he was born. And here, now, in my old age, I was standing on the spot where he had died; away here, in the far South. Surely, but few of his descendants could truthfully say that! Kahu hunu, the Kaitaia-born, founder and eponymous ancestor of the great Ngati-Kahungunu tribe, that most considerable of modern Maori tribes, respected and feared, which controlled and held that vast estate which extends from north of the Nukutaaurua Peninsula, to Wellington itself. And now, of which it may be written: Sic Transit Gloria Mundi: Haere ra; e Kahu ma.

The following is a list of his wives, as recited by his southern descendants:—No. 1: Hinetapu, Kaitaia, Begat Tamatea-iti; No. 2: Kahungunu X Kahukura wai-arai, Whakatane, Begat Po Tirohia; No. 3: Kahungunu X Te Hiau-taruke, Opotiki, Begat Rakai Whakatau and Papaka; No. 4: Kahungunu X Rua Rau-hanga, Whangara, eldest daughter of Raupani, by his chief wife, Wairau, Begat Ruaroa and Rongo-maire; No. 5, Kahungunu X Rua Rere-tai, Whangara, Begat Rua Rere-tieke; No. 6: Kahungunu X Hine puari-puari, Whare-onga-onga, Begat Po Whiro; No. 7: Kahungunu X Rongomai Wahine, Tawaputa Begat Kahu-kun-nui (and six others); No. 8: Powhara Kura captured at Kaiwhaka-reirei, Begat Ruatapu.

The Ngai-Tamatea and Ngati-Kahu, of Rangiaohia and the Puhi family of Pukepoto, near Kaitaia, are direct descendants of Kahungunu, by his northern wife, already referred to. With this short sketch, which contains germs of great historical interest, we may now take our leave of that remarkable Kaitaia-born, Kahu-hunuhunu.





Samoa TE KOOTI. *Rivian angia.*

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