

The Whakatohea Maori Trust Board

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NGA URI O MURIWAI

THE WHAKATOHEA IWI HISTORY BY: CLAUDE EDWARDS

To have a complete understanding of the Current composition at Whakatohea in terms of its recognized Hapu and its land and other assets it is necessary to go back to the time when European influence first began to alter the behaviour and life style of our people, to be more exact from the 1840's and leading into the 1860's. At that time the area of land that the Whakatohea dominated and in fact claimed as their own covered 490,000 acres. The ancestral boundaries of the Whakatohea land according to evidence given by Te Hoeroa Horokai and Heremia Hoeroa at Opotiki on the 14 July 1920 is as follows; Commencing at Pakihi at the mouth of the river along the sea coast to the mouth of the Waiotahi stream to the mouth of the Ohiwa stream to Tehoro (a hill) and then turning inland southwards to Puhikoko (a hill) by straight line to Pukemoremore (a hill) then to Mapouriki (a hill) at one time a fighting Pa. Then descending to Waimana stream Mapouriki being on the bank. Following the Waimana stream towards its source at Tautautahi (a hill) along the banks to the mouth of the Parau stream then following Parau stream to Tangata-e-roha (a hill) on to Kaharoa (an old settlement). From Kaharoa to Ta-Harakeke a ridge leading towards Maungapohatu to Maungatapere (a hill) descending into Motu river to Kaitaura falls to Peketutu (a rock in the river that was an old crossing). Leaving the river and up a ridge to Whakararonga (a hill) following along the hill tops till it reaches Tipi o Houmea (a peak) descending towards Makomako (another hill) till it crosses Takaputahi stream to Ngaupoko tangata (a mountain) following the ridge to Kamakama (a mound resting place) along the ridge to Oroi (a trig station) then turning seawards to Te Rangi on the sea coast. It is a stone on the sea coast visible at low tide, then along the sea coast to the mouth of the Opape stream, to Awahou stream to Tirohanga and back to Pakihi. This then was the domain of the Whakatohea people and as I mentioned earlier an area of about 490,00 acres.

In the early period of European influence Government policies were creating incentives and subtle pressures to separate the Maori from his land.

The Government employed people as land purchase agents and a private company the New Zealand land purchase company was operating. The ownership of this company is known to have included some English gentlemen of historical fame and its activities were clearly land speculation.

The Government agents were under instructions to purchase any land that the Maori people could be persuaded to sell, while the land company was busy buying land for purely speculation and profit motives.

It must be remembered that our Maori people were at the mercy of these agents who had the advantage of centuries of business and farming as well as other types of land utilization skills.

For example the development of towns, wharves, trading centres and so on. Added to this the Europeans had a monetary system with the legal structure as well as the surveying and land title offices these being the necessary machinery enabling him to process and legalize his operations.

When the Maori Chiefs on behalf of their people signed the Treat of Waitangi they in doing so accepted all these administrative facilities of the European civilisation.

Whilst our ancestors were a very intelligent race we would have to admit that they were at a great disadvantage when it came to understanding fully all the implications at any sale of land or transactions by lease or otherwise that they became involved in.

As a result by the 1850's they were beginning to resist the pressures to sell their land. So much that the settlers began advocating for the Maori people to be forced to part with their unused land.

A confrontation began to develop and the possibility of a war of conquest appeared eminent.

Tremendous pressure was brought to bear on the Maori people in the Waikato and Taranaki so much so that groups of Maori people began organising themselves into what the Europeans termed rebels.

One of these was the Hau Hau Cult which originated in the Taranaki district. It was a party of this Hau Hau Cult under the leadership of Kereopa a Chief of the Ngatiwhakaue tribe came to Opotiki and on the 3 March 1865 murdered the Reverend Volkner, and Anglican missionary station in Opotiki.

The stage was now set for the final act, the confiscation of the Whakatohea lands.

The authorities of the time on hearing of the crime immediately despatched a punitive force of armed constabulary in to the Whakatohea district.

The steamers Ladybird, Stormbird and Ahuriri with warship Brisk and the paddle steamer Huntress. Captain Levi who had been in Opotiki at the time of Volkners murder acted as pilot.

An interesting event that occurred when these ships were entering the bar into the Opotiki wharf was the grounding of the Huntress on the mouth of a tidal creek. These troops on landing immediately engaged the Hau Hau forces.

There were also a number of Maori troops from Wanganui in the armed constabulary and they took part in the battle. Finally the army gained control and the battle ceased Kereopa and his hard core of followers escaped into the forests of the Waioeka and on into the Urewera.

The Whakatohea were accused of giving shelter to these Hau Hau warriors and further more one of the Whakatohea men was arrested because the Europeans who were here stated that this man supplied the rope with which Volkner was hung. He was taken to Mount Eden jail and tried, found guilty and executed. To this day we the Whakatohea maintain that he was innocent.

The Government now invoked a law which it had put through Parliament in 1863 it was known as The New Zealand Settlements Act 1863 and its main purpose was to enable the crown to confiscate the lands of members of certain tribes of the Taranki and Waikato districts who had been engaging themselves in acts of rebellion against the Queen.

Without any form of inquiry or right of reply for the Whakatohea. In 1865 the Governor using the powers within the act confiscated 143,780 acres of the most fertile lands including the Pa's and habitations of the Whakatohea, their kumara cultivations sacred burial places and fishing harbours. Surveyors were put to work in the area which the orders in council described as follows;

All that land bounded by a line commencing at the mouth of the Waitahanui river, Bay of Plenty and running due

south for a distance of twenty miles.

Then to the summit of Putauaki they by a straight line in an Easterly direction to a point eleven miles due south from the entrance to the Ohiwa harbour. Then by line running east for twenty miles. Then by line to the mouth of the Haparapara river, and then following the coast line to the point of commencement at Waitahanui.

It must be realised that these places were the points from which the survey was to be done the actual land area was well within these points. The land was surveyed into 50 - 100 and 200 acre blocks from Waiaua river east of Opotiki to Ohiwa the Western side and the south boundary running through the hills.

With the survey completed each man of the Waikato first regiment which had been sent to Opotiki received an acre elsewhere, Officers receiving more according to rank and for which lots were drawn.

Each man also received rations for twelve months and 1000 feet of timber to build a house. The motives for the confiscation had become apparent that was the settlement of more European on fertile surveyed and titled blocks.

Our people were now well and truly under the control of Government legislation.

The Whakatohea at the height of its power was comprised of numerous Hapu, many more than the six Hapu we know these being Ngaitama, Ngatirua, Ngatipatu, Ngatingahere, Ngatira and Te Upokorehe. The courts now began the task of resettling the Whakatohea on their poorer marginal lands that they had been reduced to.

It was the courts that decided that the Whakatohea would now be comprised of six Hapu. The surveying and documenting of these lands was done and the people resettled in the districts that they occupy today.

This ruling was established in 1872 and a list of adult males, adult females and their children was compiled as the people of each hapu.

It was on the 2nd of August 1919 that titles were issued and individual ownerships registered on the titles.

It is those lands now known collectively as the Nukutere 438 Trust that indicated that the Whakatohea accepted its Status of six Hapu.

This was a very significant matter because it was on the basis of those six Hapu that the Whakatohea people made numerous approaches to Government on the confiscation of their lands.