Te Aotāwarirangi and the Battle of Toiroa

TE AOTĀWARIRANGI is the renowned ancestor of the tribe in Tokomaru bearing the same name. She was the daughter of Tautini and Hinetamatea both of whom were grandchildren of the famous Hauiti and his wife Kahukuraiti, the daughter of Rongowhakaata and Moetai. Tautini's father was Kahukuranui, the eldest son of Hauiti. Kahukuranui was responsible for consolidating the estate of his father Hauiti, in the aftermath of his battle with his elder brothers, Taua and Mahaki (See *Tītīrangi and Ūawa — November 07*). Kahukuranui achieved this by placing his three sons at strategic points in the conquered area — Te Aketūangiangi at Maungakōwhai near the Waikawa stream in Waipiro to the north; Kapi-horo-maunga at Anaura to the south; and in the centre at Toiroa near Tokomaru was Tautini.

Tautini, the father of Te Aotāwarirangi, was not much liked by his peers, least of all his neighbours the Wahineiti, because of his penchant for human flesh, particularly that of young children. When the occasion demanded he would push children over the cliff from his hill-top pā (fortress) at Toiroa to be gathered by one of his attendants and prepared for his meals. However the child of Tū-te-manga-rewa of Te Wahineiti, was to be Tautini's last meal as he was caught in the act and killed by Tū-te-manga-rewa. The death of such an important person however, couldn't go unpunished and when Te Aotāwarirangi heard the news she covered herself in red ochre, rendering herself tapū (sacred), and demanded from Tū-te-manga-rewa the return of her father's head. She then set out overland for Kawakawa (Te Araroa) to seek the help of her brother, Tū-te-rangi-katipu and her uncle, Tūwhakairiora. Tū-te-rangi-katipu had fought with Tūwhakairiora and had married his daughters, Māriu and Te Ātaakura.

Te Aotāwarirangi

Tautini

Tūterangikatipu

Toiroa the pā of Tautini

Te Aotāwarirangi, the ancestral house at Ariuru Marae.

Along the way, Te Aotāwarirangi displayed her father's head in the hope of rallying support from observing onlookers. At Maungakōwhai, Te Aketūangiangi requested that she call upon him on her return because he had partaken of the shoulder of her father — who was also his own brother! Upon reaching Kawakawa she passed the head to her brother, Tū-te-rangi-katipu, who paraded it before the locals urging them to battle. Tū-te-rangi-katipu also performed karakia (incantations) to remove the tapū from his sister and to ensure the success of the avenging taua (war party). Under the leadership of Tū-te-rangi-katipu and Tūwhakairiora, the war party returned to Tokomaru. Along the way they stopped at Maungakōwhai and fulfilled the wish of Te Aketūangiangi, attacking and disposing of him and his followers. The same fate awaited those at Niniho pā where Hai-atau, the man who had brought Tautini's shoulder to Te Aketūangiangi, was captured and killed. At Tātara-koura, a defiant haka by its inhabitants, stripped naked for the occasion, so impressed the avenging party that they continued on to Toiroa.

When the party reached Tokomaru, Tū-te-manga-rewa, under the cover of darkness, covertly embedded himself in the avenging taua to assess their strengths and weaknesses. He was recognised however, and pointed out to Tū-te-rangi-katipu, but managed to slip away to take up his position at the entrance way of Toiroa. Arriving at the gate of the pā, Tū-te-rangi-katipu confronted and dispatched Tū-te-manga-rewa and in moments the fate of the people inside Toiroa was sealed.

Thus the death of Tautini, father of Te Aotāwarirangi, was avenged and the toll on Wahineiti was again, severe. For their services, the avenging taua, consisting mainly of Te Whānau-a-Hinerupe from Kawakawa, was practically gifted the whole of Tokomaru by Te Aotāwarirangi and this was agreed to by her brother, Tū-te-rangi-katipu. However, time would dictate that the claim by Te Whānau-a-Hinerupe to the district would lapse for want of occupation and that mana whenua (land rights) would revert to the descendants of Tautini and his daughter, Te Aotāwarirangi.

Ruatepupuke A Marae Abroad

IN the Field Museum in Chicago, USA, stands Ruatepupuke, a fully decorated wharenui (meeting-house) which formerly stood right here in Tokomaru Bay. This house was opened in 1881 but was the second to bear the name. Ruatepupuke I which formerly stood on the site of the current Tuatini Marae was dismantled, soaked in whale oil and buried in the Mangahauini stream in 1820 lest it fell into the hands of the invading Ngāpuhi tribe who weeks earlier had successfully besieged the fortress pā of Whetumatarau in Te Araroa. The course of the river subsequently changed and the carvings were never recovered.

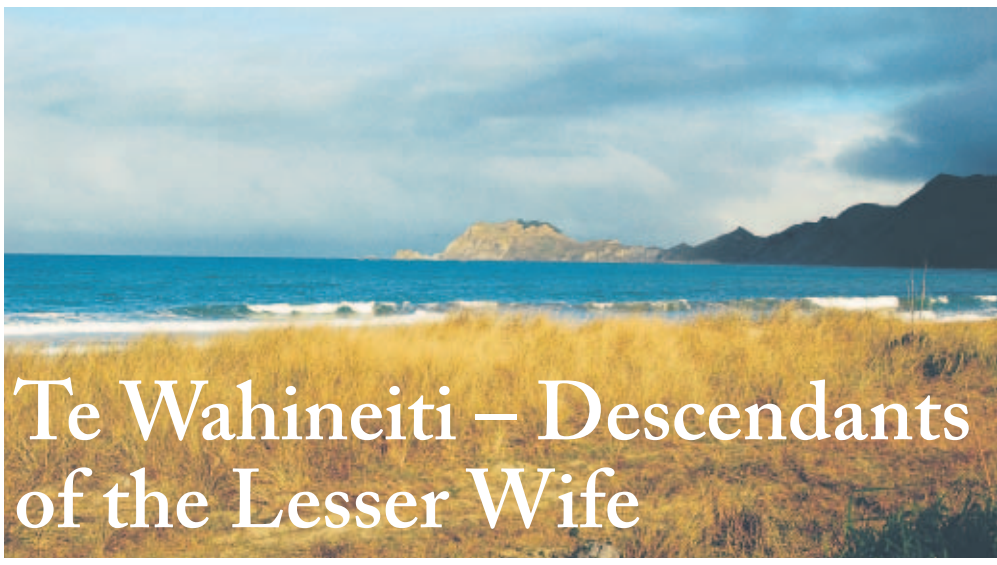
The 1881 Ruatepupuke, also referred to as Ruatepupuke II, was built for Mōkena Rōmio Babbington, an eminent leader of the time and son of Mere Karaka Tiratapu and George Babbington, a whaler and one of the first white settlers in Tokomaru. The house stood on Beach Road about 50 metres from the Mangahauini River bridge. Sometime in the 1890s the house was sold to a Mr Hindmarsh, a dealer in Māori curios and eventually passed into the hands of J.F.G. Umlauff, a prominent dealer in natural history objects from Hamburg, Germany. In 1902, Umlauff put the house up for sale, describing it as the most important and most interesting piece in his sale catalogue. To enhance its appeal to prospective buyers, Umlauff erected the house in its entirety but with modifications, including cutting all the pou (wall posts) to the same length, so that it could sit flat on the floor of the exhibition area, replacing missing carved boards from the front of the house with plaster casts and making improvised tukutuku panels since all the original ones were missing. The designs for these panels were taken from a book by Augustus Hamilton which came from Porourangi meeting house in Wai-o-matatini (near Ruatōrea).

Ruatepupuke II in the Field Museum, Chicago, USA.

In 1905 the meeting house was eventually sold to the Field Columbian Museum in Chicago (now The Field Museum), through its curator, George Dorsey, but was kept in storage for 20 years due to lack of space. In 1925 the house was taken from storage and reconstructed exactly as Umlauff had erected it in Hamburg years earlier. However, to recapture its authenticity, approaches were made to New Zealand for whāriki (floor mats) and kākaho (roofing material) for the house. The Hon Apirana Ngata was approached to assist and in turn asked the people of Tokomaru to weave 24 whāriki which were shipped to Chicago.

The house underwent other modifications over the years however it was not until 1992 that full restoration and reconstruction was started. This project involved the people of Tokomaru Bay who made all the new tukutuku (woven) panels for the house under the guidance of local kaumātua, Phil Aspinall. On 9th March, 1993, Ruatepupuke II was formally opened to the public.

The people of Tokomaru have discussed the future of their whare, Ruatepupuke, including its possible return to Aotearoa. However, for the foreseeable future they are happy that it remain, a marae abroad, in the Field Museum in Chicago.



Te Wahineiti – Descendants of the Lesser Wife

Te Māwhai Point, the home of Hau and the place where he argued with his brother Ueroa.

Tahuri mai ki āu, ki tō wahine iti
Turn hence to me, to your lesser wife

Māhau te wahine matua, ki āu te wahine iti
Take thee my principal wife, leave to me the lesser wife

WAHINEITI have featured in two other stories on these pages and in both cases they have been on the receiving end of a good old thrashing. At their height, they were a prolific tribe, occupying a huge expanse of territory from Whāngārā in the south all the way to the Waiapu valley in the north. But despite their numbers their existence appeared very much dictated by the actions of other tribal groupings, some of whom were Wahineiti factions themselves. So, who were Wahineiti and where did they come from?

Porourangi, the eponymous ancestor of Ngāti Porou, whilst living in Whāngārā with his wife Hamo-te-rangi, fathered three children – sons, Hau and Ueroa and a daughter, Rongomai-āniwaniwa. Hau, the eldest son married two sisters, Takotowaimua and Tamateatōia and moved to live at Te Māwhai in Tokomaru with a number of relatives and his brother Ueroa, in tow. Takotowaimua was Hau's principal wife but when she became pregnant with their first and only child, Kehu-tiko-pārae, she developed a fondness for her husband's younger brother, Ueroa. When Hau found out he naturally hit the roof and quarrelled bitterly with his brother. At one point Hau even threatened to take up arms against his brother. Without any hope of resolution and to prevent further escalation of the situation, Ueroa left Te Māwhai together with Takotowaimua. Another version of the story says that the two eloped.

As Ueroa and Takotowaimua departed, Tamateatōia, the junior wife of Hau, turned to her husband and consoled him with the words, "Tahuri mai ki āu, ki tō wahine iti — Turn hence to me, to your lesser wife." An alternative to this narrative had Hau calling to his brother, "Māhau te wahine matua, ki āu te wahine iti — Take thee my principal wife, leave to me the lesser wife." Thus the name Wahineiti originated and was to be given to all the descendants of Hau and his lesser wife, Tamateatōia through their children, Rākaipō, Awapururu and Tūere (circa 1500AD). Within three to four generations Wahineiti would become a dominant force along the entire eastern seaboard and feature in a number of major battles against tribal groupings that emerged from the same whakapapa (genealogy) bloodlines as they did. In the aftermath of these battles, however, the Wahineiti were decimated and essentially ceased to exist as a separate tribe.

The incident between Hau and Ueroa is referred to as, Te Taranga i a Ue rāua ko Hau — The parting of Ue and Hau and the places where they stood at Te Māwhai before parting are known as Ue and Hau.