

HISTORY OF THE WAIU-TOA / CLARENCE RIVER

He Kupu Whakataki - Introduction

Ngāti Kurī are the tangata whenua who have manawhenua and manamoana from Te Parinui o Whiti (White Bluffs) in the north to the Hurunui River in the south and inland to the main divide. Māori have occupied the Kaikōura district for over 800 years before the arrival of the first Europeans. The Waiau-toa was is an area of cultural significance to Ngāi Tahu and was a particular focus point for Ngāti Kurī claiming manawhenua over the Kaikōura coast.

Tāpuae O’Uenuku

The mountain Tāpuae O’Uenuku is located in the Waiau-toa catchment, and is the highest peak in Kā Whata Tū a Rakihouia (The Seaward Kaikōura Range). The name Tāpuae O’Uenuku means “The Sacred footsteps of Uenuku’. In Māori tradition Uenuku is the Rainbow God.

Tāpuae O’Uenuku is recorded as an passenger on the famous Ārai-te-uru waka that brought kumara to Aotearoa. The Ārai-te-uru tradition is important for not only explains the origins of kumara in New Zealand but explains how many of the mountains and other major geographic features of Te Waipounamu were created and named. The Ārai-te-uru waka crashed at Matakaea (Shag Point) on the northern Otago coastline with the kumara and gourds of the Ārai-te-uru waka washing onto the beach to form Kaihinaki (The Moeraki Boulders).

Many of the passengers on board the waka decided to leave the waka and walk over the new lands, however they needed to be back on the waka before daylight. One of these passengers was Tāpuae O’Uenuku who was changed into the mountain which is still the highest peak in Ka Whata Tu a Rakihouia.

Under the Ngāi Tahu Settlement statutory mechanisms were created to ensure that Ngāi Tahu values were incorporated into the management of areas of significance to Ngāi Tahu. One of these mechanisms is Tōpuni, where areas administered by the Department of Conservation are managed with respect to Ngāi Tahu values. Tāpuae O’Uenuku is a Tōpuni under the Ngāi Tahu Claims Settlement Act 1998.²

Waiau-toa and Waiau-ua

Waiau-toa is the Māori name for the Clarence River, and is cosmologically linked with the Waiau-ua River, commonly known as the Waiau River. The Waiau-toa river refers to the male river, and the Waiau-ua river as the female river. There are many different versions of the link between the two rivers with respected Pākehā historian W.J Elvy recording one association in his book ‘Kaikoura: Māori History’, however, more research is required to define the extent of this association.

² Te Poha o Tohu Raumati, Section 1.

Mahinga Kai

Historically, the Waiau-toa area was famous for mahinga kai. In the Ngāi Tahu evidence presented to the Waitangi Tribunal the foods recorded to be gathered from the Waiau-toa area included birds such as kererū, weka, kūkū, kākā, kiwi, tui, kōkō, pāteke, parera, pūtakitaki, tata, korimako, karoro, toroa, titi, tarapunga, torea, takapū and kawau, plants such as harakeke, raupō, taramea, kiekie, pingao and tīkumu, and kaimoana such as pāua, kina, kuku, pupu, pipi and karengo.

In particular the Waiau-toa is well-known for an extensive complex of gardens. At one time, a large agricultural community successfully lived at the Waiau-toa because of the excellent condition for agriculture, as evidenced by the large concentration of gardens, borrow pits, umu and midden that make the Waiau-toa one of the most significant archaeological areas in New Zealand. It was a very substantial geographical site, covering not just the pā at the mouth, but the surrounding lands that would have been cultivated for gardens. Kūmara grew in plenty thanks to the microclimate of the area. For more detailed information regarding the large agricultural complex at the Waiau-toa 'The Tattooed Land' by Barry Brailsford.

Earliest Occupation of Waiau-toa

In pre-European times, the Clarence Valley was one of the most populated areas of Te Waipounamu. The earliest people known to have occupied Te Waipounamu are Waitaha. Waitaha is regarded as a tribal name for a group of people who descend directly from the Waitaha rangatira Rākaihautū and also as a general name for all the different people who occupied Te Waipounamu prior to the arrival of Ngāti Mamoe to Te Waipounamu from the east coast of Te Ika a Māui.

The best definitive historical account of Māori occupational history of the Kaikōura coast is from Hariata Beaton, a noted wahine rangatira from Ōaro. A famous Ngāti Mamoe pā is located on the south side of the Waiau-toa, however it is also very likely that the Waiau-toa area was also occupied and used prior to the Ngāti Mamoe arrival to the Kaikōura coast.

Waipapa

The Waipapa settlement is located on the southern bank of the Waiau-toa and was a hugely significant platform for not only Ngāti Kurī establishing manawhenua over Kaikōura but the eventual migration of Ngāi Tahu to Te Waipounamu.

The first pā that Ngāti Kurī established when they arrived into Te Waipounamu was Kaihinu in Kura-a-te-āu (Tory Channel) under the leadership of Pūraho and his son Marukaitātea (commonly known as Maru).

By the time Ngāti Kurī constructed Kaihinu Ngāti Mamoe were living at Waipapa. Ngāti Mamoe descends from an ancestor who in our records is known as Hotu Mamoe and Whatu Mamoe. These people coalesced into a tribe in the late 15th century on the east coast of Te Ika a Māui. Originally Ngāti Mamoe, an iwi that arrived in Te Waipounamu from the east coast of Te Ika a Māui, lived at the Waipapa settlement. Whether Ngāti Mamoe established the Waipapa settlement or took it from another iwi is unknown, but what is known is that by the time Ngāti Kurī arrived in Te Waipounamu Ngāti Mamoe were well established along the Kaikōura coast.

Waipapa was attacked by Rangitāne, a iwi based at the top of Te Waipounamu, who took many Ngāti Mamoe captives back to their settlement at the Wairau river. One of these Ngāti Mamoe people taken captive was a woman of high ranking status named Hinerongo.

It wasn't too long after Ngāti Kurī settled at Kaihinu that they became embroiled with the local iwi and hapū including Rangitāne, after their leader Pūraho was killed. Under the leadership of the Ngāti Kurī rangatira Tūteurutira, Ngāti Kurī defeated Rangitāne in a battle at the Wairau river. Ngāti Kurī took many captives from their defeat of Rangitāne and headed back to their settlement at Kura-a-te-au (Tory Channel).

However, during their northern voyage Tūteurutira noticed that one of their prisoners wept for her people at Waipapa and for many of the major geographical features along the Kaikōura coast, including the mountain Kairuru, located on the south side of the Waiau-toa which was famed for tikumu. Once Tūteurutira realised Hinerongo's whakapapa and status he decided to return her back to her Ngāti Mamoe people of Waipapa. They landed at the tauranga waka (canoe landing site) at the mouth of the Waiau-toa, known as Kōtukunui, where they warmly received by Ngāti Mamoe.

Tūteurutira then led a war-party consisting of Ngāti Mamoe and Ngāti Kurī which defeated Rangitāne again. Tūteurutira and Hinerongo went onto marry each other and Tūteurutira was given half the land from Ngāti Mamoe at Waipapa.

Te Āpoka-i-Hawaiki, a nephew of Tūteurutira, was given two highly born Ngāti Mamoe wives and a block of land at Waiau-toa. Te Āpoka was to eventually realise that his Ngāti Mamoe wives were only given him common food to eat such as āruhe (fernroot) and common, while his wives had a secret pātaka (food storehouse) filled with a variety of preserved foods and fish, such as tītī (mutton-birds), parrots, weka, dog, hapuku/hapuka (groper), pigeons and all kinds of dainties.

Te Āpoka, and his father Te Rākaitauheke led Ngāti Kurī into war against Ngāti Mamoe at Waiau-toa for how Te Āpoka was treated. They made a wide detour around Matariki so Tūteurutira could not warn his Ngāti Mamoe relatives of the oncoming attack. From his pā at Matariki Tūteurutira saw the dust hanging over Waipapa and the war party returning along the beach. The reply as to what had happened at Waipapa from Te Rākaitauheke when the party reached Matariki was 'nothing now moves at Waipapa save the waters of Haumakariri'.⁸ With the fall of Waipapa the Ngāi Tahu chiefs persuaded Tūteurutira to abandon his pā at Matariki.

Ngāti Kurī were then to occupy the Waiau-toa area and then migrated southwards along the Kaikōura coast following their Ngāti Mamoe relations until Ngāti Mamoe eventually left Kaikōura to the most southern lands of Te Waipounamu. Ngāti Kurī were then to hold manawhenua over the Kaikōura area and continue to do so today.

Tūteurutira, a recognised chief of Ngāti Mamoe, then constructed his pa at Matariki at the mouth of the Waiau-toa where he lived with his wife and people.

Archaeological Remains

⁸ Carrington, A. H. (1934). Ngāi Tahu: The story of the invasion and occupation of the South Island of New Zealand by the descendants of Tahu-pōtiki. P39

The best written resources regarding the large Māori archaeological complex on the northern side of the Waiau-toa are 'The Tattooed Land' by Barry Brailsford and the archaeological survey of the State Highway 1 undertaken by Michael Trotter and Bev McCulloch, which was commissioned by Transit New Zealand.

W.J Elvy in his book 'Kaikōura Coast: The History, Traditions and Māori Place Names of Kaikōura' records the archaeological values in the Waiau-toa area, with particular focus on the Matariki pā complex, the archaeological remains discovered during the public works operations including kōiwi tangata (human remains), middens, fish-hooks, bird spears and other useful articles.