

The History of the Ngati Kahungunu of Wairoa

Takitimu was one of the ancestral waka, which Hawaiki-nui, Hawaiki-roa, and Hawaiki-pamamoa sailed in to the land of Aotearoa. This Waka (canoe) was very tapu (sacred) as it carried the Maori gods, Kahukura, Tamaiwaho, Tuniateika, Hine Korako, Ronomai and Ruawharo. The waka was not permitted to carry any woman or food on its journey.

Takitimu was captained by Tamatea Ariki-nui. His sons, Rangi-nui and Kahungunu, had come with him as had the priests, Ruawharo, Tupai and Te Rongopatahi. Takitimu made its first landing at Whangaparaoa carried on around the North Cape to Hokianga then returned around the North Cape and continued its voyage down the East Coast until it reached Nukutaurua, (Table Cape) to Mahia. It was here that the priests Ruawharo and Tupai left the Takitimu waka with others.

Ruawharo took the god Kaukura, which was wrapped in dog skin, and buried it on the shores of Te Mahia. Tamatea and the remainder of his crew continued their Journey, making a stop at Wairoa, before carrying on south. Ruawharo built his pa (fort) at Oraka and named it Wahatoa.

Kahungunu was the son of Tamatea Pokai Whenua and was born at Kaitaia. He came to the East Coast after insulting his brother Whaene, who had thrown a tamure (snapper) at Kahungunu. With his pride hurt Kahungunu went to live with his sister Haumanga and her husband Tuna-nui at Opotiki. Kahungunu waged war against his brother as he felt it was he who had been insulted, not Whaene, but there was never a battle between them.

Kahungunu soon moved to Titirangi where he took his first wife, Rua-rere-tai. It wasn't long before he left Titirangi and went to Whare-onga-onga where he took a second wife, Hine-pu-ariari. Finally he came to Tawa pata at Nukutaurua where he laid his eyes on Rongo-mai-wahine.

Rongo-mai-wahine was already the wife of Tama-taku-tai. Kahungunu won Rongo-mai-wahine's love by discrediting her husband. He went and gathered paua for the tribe and ate the roe. During the night, he repeatedly snuck in beside Rongo-mai-wahine and Tama-taku-tai played his trick and left.

Rongo-mai-wahine woke and blamed her husband for the ill wind and kicked him out. Soon after this event, Kahungunu the provider went out fishing with Tama-taku-tai, knowing that tama couldn't swim, he swamped the canoe. Tama drowned and Kahungunu took Rongo-mai-wahine as his wife.

Rongo-mai-wahine became pregnant, and when Kahungunu's father heard of this he gathered many gifts and began the journey to visit his son. When he reached the pa at Mou-mou-kai however, he heard that a girl child had already been born and that it hadn't been Kahungunu's after all, but Tama's.

Tamatea Pokai Whenua left all of the gifts he had brought at Mou-mou-kai and went on to Wairoa without visiting Kahungunu. When Kahungunu heard about the gifts his father cast away he named the child Hine-Tauri (lady-castaway). Kahungunu had five other children by Rongo-mai-wahine, Kahukuranui (m), Mahakinui (m), Rongo-mai-papa (f), Tamate Kota (m) and Tauhei-kuri (f).

Kahungunu and his tribe were only attacked once while he was alive. During 1475, when Kahungunu was an old man, an attempted siege was made on his pa Maunga a Kahia on the Eastern side of Mahia Peninsula north of Nukutaurua.

The war party was led by Tamure who was the son of Kahungunu's sister Haumanga in Opotiki. He had been named by Kahungunu after his brother had thrown at Tamure at him. When it was discovered that Tamure was a cousin, a marriage arrangement was made between Tamures brother and Kahungunu's daughter Tuhei-kuri. So Kahungunu's only war was settled diplomatically.

Kahungunu died at Maunga A kahia and his people took the name Ngati Kahungunu, Rongo-mai-wahine became known as the mother of Ngati Kahungunu. Her figure representation can be found over the main door entrance of the Takitimu marae today.

The Ngati Kahungunu people are identified today as the largest land holding tribe of Aotearoa. They have a tribal boundary, which stretches from south of Gisborne down the East Coast to Wairarapa and across the strait into the South Island. The tribe is recognized by the marriage of Kahungunu and Rongo-mai-wahine.

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The First Europeans to arrive in Mahia-Wairoa Area were flax traders from New South Wales (Australia). They were soon followed by whalers. As we can recall, when Tuawharo landed at Nukutaurua, he buried the Mauri which was the life principle of the whales and other fish. It is believed that it is this Mauri which draws the whales into the bay and causes them to beach. Gradually the Maori joined the Whaling Stations which had been set up as tapu (sacred) and magical beast was faced with mass slaughter.

Unfortunately for the people of Ngati Kahungunu the European had brought the muskets with them. Many Maori leaders bartered their flax, timber and even dried heads to obtain the might pu (musket). Ngati Kahungunu were slow at obtaining guns nation wide. Mahia became a place of refuge as Ngati Kahungunu tribes from Heretaunga and Wairarapa were invaded by other tribes with muskets and driven from their land.

During 1821, a party of Northern Nga Puhi warriors, led by Te Wera Hauraki, raided Te Mahia Pa. Ngati Kahungunu were easily defeated and Te Wera became their new chief. In 1824 further raids were made by Nga Puhi at Titirangi, Nuhaka and other Kahungunu pa's between Mahia and Wairoa. Nga Puhi carried muskets, Kahungunu did not.

In 1832, the tables turned as Northern tribes rose up against Te Wera and a siege was led by Te Heuheu upon the pa at Kai-uku. Te Heuheu and his warriors were armed with the white man's musket.

Ngati Kahungunu refused to surrender and to save themselves from starvation they ate the grey clay surrounding the pa. Thus it became known as Kai-uku and the Kahungunu became known as the clay eaters. Eventually a large party of warriors arrived from the Bay of Plenty to help Te Wera, and Te Heuheu was driven away.

Soon after, Te Wera led a party of warriors against Te Heuheu in Taupo as he wanted to restore Kahungunu's mana which had been diminished when they were forced to eat mud to survive. Peace was made after a bloody battle when Te Rohu a daughter of Te Heuheu was given in marriage to Te Moananui a Kahungunu chief.

Next it was an onslaught from the missionaries. William Williams arrived in February 1840 and held a service in Maori and then in English. Three hundred Maori, curious about the white man's god attended the service and only four Europeans attended the English version.

By 1855, the Maori of Wairoa wanted to learn the new pakeha religion. Two leading chiefs in the district, Pitihera Kopu and Paroa Te Apatu, chose Tamihana Huata to teach them to worship the new god.

Tamihana Huata was preaching at the time of the Hauhau wars. A group of warriors led by hauhau, rejected the ministers and their religion. They murdered ministers of the Christian Church to show the supremacy of their god Rura. The Hauhaus erected poles of worship at Whakaki, Te Uhi and Putahi.

The Hauhau were eventually driven out of the district by Kahungunu with the help of a Major Ropata Wahawaha and hundreds of warriors from Ngati Porou and Hikurangi.

The most recognized religious movement made by the Maori in Wairoa was the Kohititanga movement. It began in 1894 when God spoke to an elder of the Putahi Pa at Frasertown, Te Matenga Tamiti. He was told that time of the temple had come and he was to construct it.

The temple was to be built from twelve posts that were forty feet in length and four feet square. The pillars were to be named after the twelve children of Jacob. The task was to be surrounded by tapu. Twelve totora trees were chosen from the grove at Mangatawhiti near Waikaremoana. The trees were brought across the land to the Manga-aruhe stream which joins the Wairoa River. The logs were then floated down the river and across the bar to Korito beach, which had been chosen as the temple site.

A breach of tapu occurred when the logs passed by Wairoa. Two men tried to claim one of the logs by boat. As they touched the log their boat capsized and they ended up sitting on it. One swam to safety but the other was drowned when the log rolled. Eleven of the logs landed at Korito, but the one which had been sat on ended up at Waikokopu and a boat had to be chartered to bring it back.

All the logs were together by 1904, but because of the breach of tapu, Te Matenga Tamiti told his faithful followers that they wouldn't be the builders of the temple. Matenga continued to lead his flock for ten years. He died in 1914 and was buried at Korito near the logs. They can still be seen today, lying side by side at the end of Iwitea Road, five minutes out of Wairoa.

The most important thing which Ngati kahungunu people identify themselves with today is the Takitimu Marae.

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When the Takitimu canoe crossed the Wairoa bar it landed at Makeakea stream where one of the skids accidentally fell into the water and became a Taniwha. Part of the skid was taken to a chief named Kopu-para-para who carved it into a Tiki.

The first building was erected by Pitihera Kopu at his pa, Te Hatepe. The tiki carved by Kopu-para-para was placed above the Maihi. In 1867, after Pitihera Kopu died, an invitation was sent to Te Kooti Rikirangi to come to Wairoa. During 1888 the Takitimu Meeting House was dismantled and rebuilt at Wai-herere Pa.

Te Kooti arrived in 1890 and when he left he warned that Waiherere would become befogged but rise again. "Ko koe e Te Wai-herere ka pokia e te kohu a he wa ana tonu ka puea"

The Takitimu house did become abandoned and was mysteriously burnt down. Sir Apirana Ngata encouraged the re-erection of the meeting house and in 1926 Hata Tipoki (the second) took control of the construction.

The carvings of Takitimu tell the history of the Ngati Kahungunu, marking important events of their tribal history. The meeting house is very elaborately carved. The Tekoteko represents the tribal ancestor, Kahungunu, who Ngati Kahungunu identify themselves with. Takitimu is carved on the right Maihi and Horouta on the left. Tamatea Ariki-nui and Ruawhero are on the right hand Amo and Pawa and kiwa of the Horouta canoe are on the left. The carved figure of Rongo-mai-wahine is on the Pare. Today the meeting house is recognized as a memorial to the late Sir James Carroll.

Takitimu was to celebrate its fiftieth jubilee in 1988 but damage was caused to the marae during Cyclone Bola and the celebrations were postponed until 1990.

1990 saw the completion of the Tamatea-Ariki-nui waka by members of the Ngati Kahungunu at Porangahau. It had been built by Maori and Pakeha for the celebrations at Waitangi for the 150th year since the Treaty. The waka paddlers were chosen from all over Hawke's Bay. Thirty were chosen from Wairoa, men and young boys. Ngati Kahungunu could now identify themselves with the largest waka at the Waitangi celebrations.

There was an occurrence which took place at Waitangi that added to the feeling of awe that surrounded the celebrations. At the same time that an Ariki died in Rangiatea, the hull of Tamatea Ariki split. All tribes

present helped to mend the hull in time for the celebrations. For once tribes worked together instead of being at war with each other.

The celebrations were made as traditional as possible with appropriate dress and chants applied.

After the Waitangi celebrations, the waka was returned to Porangahau. The waka was then launched there and paddled for eleven and three quarter hours to attend the Takitimu jubilee in Wairoa. First it landed at the Makeakea stream where the Takitimu waka lost its skid, then Tamtea-Arikinui came and moored below the Takitimu Marae. Turanga (Gisborne) also joined the celebrations with their waka.

In summary, the people of Ngati Kahungunu can identify themselves with chiefs, Kahungunu, Te Wera and Pitihera Kopu, with the first Maori member of parliament Sir Timi (James) Carroll and Wairoa can identify themselves as the origin of the Ngati Kahungunu tribe.

Ngati Kahungunu are recognized as the largest tribal land holders in Aotearoa. There is a lot of history surrounding the Wairoa – Mahia district which is kept alive on the Takitimu marae through carvings and tribal history that has been re-created through the Takitimu jubilee and New Year celebrations at Kaiuku.