

He Mihi

KO te mihi kau atu anō ki a koutou e huri nei ki tēnei putanga te tekau mā rua o, *Ngā Maunga Kōrero o Te Tairāwhiti*. Kua huri kētia mātau ki Pākaurangi, he maunga whaka-te-roto o Ūawa, me te iwi rongonui nei o Ngāti-ira. Ki ētahi he iwi ngaro kē tēnei, i patua, i whakarerea ai i ōnā whenua i roto i Te Tairāwhiti muri mai i Te Pūeru Mākū i Pākaurangi. Ahakoa tērā, kei kōnei tonu ētahi e pupuri tonu ana i tō rātau Ngāti Iratanga, ā, e mau nei ki ngā whakapapa heke mai i tō rātau tipuna, a Ira-kai-pūtahi. Heoi anō, waiho mā ngā kōrero e whai ake e whakamārama tōnā

āhuatanga. Kāti, whakatā mai, pānuhia mai, whakaarohia mai.

Greetings once again to you all and to this the twelfth issue of the series, *Ngā Maunga Kōrero o Te Tairāwhiti*. In this edition we traverse inland from Ūawa (Tolaga Bay) to the mountain of Pākaurangi and the tribal group known as Ngāti Ira. Some say that Ngāti Ira is an ancient tribe that once inhabited the entire eastern slopes of the Raukumara Range from Mount Hikurangi to Arowhana in the Mangatū Blocks. Be that as it may, there are others who still claim Ngāti Ira

descent from their founding tipuna, Ira-kai-pūtahi, and the stories that follow may help to unravel the mystery and legacy that is Ngāti Ira. Therefore, once again, relax, read and let your thoughts wander.

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Pākaurangi and Ngāti Ira



Pākaurangi — the ancestral mountain of Ngāti Ira.

Ko Pākaurangi te maunga
Pākaurangi is the mountain

Ko Waiiau te awa
Waiiau is the river

Ko Ngāti Ira te iwi
Ngāti Ira is the tribe

Tihe mauri ora!
Alas the breath of life!

BEYOND the bustle of downtown Ūawa (Tolaga Bay), nestled amongst the vast pine plantations in the back blocks of the Waiiau Valley, stands the indomitable ancestral mountain of Pākaurangi. A former stronghold of the Ngāti Ira tribe, Pākaurangi was the site of the last major battle

involving Ngāti Ira in the Te Tairāwhiti region — Te Pūeru Mākū — but more of that later. It is hard to imagine how anyone could have carved out an existence in this wild and seemingly inhospitable environment, yet Pākaurangi was home to Ngāti Ira, a tribe that once inhabited the entire eastern slopes of the Raukumara Range from Mount Hikurangi to Arowhana in the Mangatū Blocks.

Standing atop Pākaurangi it isn't hard to appreciate its strategic importance. You can see Hikurangi and Aorangi in the north, Arowhana in the south-west and Tītirangi to the east at Ūawa. Amazing though the view might be, Pākaurangi would still have been a tough place to live. Sun-drenched bays and paved roadways that we have today belie this image, but back in the day life would not have been so comfortable let alone romantic, especially with the continuous threat of attack from neighbouring rivals.

Pākaurangi symbolises the last Ngāti Ira stronghold on the East Coast. Whilst there were many other Ngāti Ira settlements

scattered between Hikurangi and Arowhana, Pākaurangi was the last major settlement. In the aftermath of the Te Pūeru Mākū (see story below), Ngāti Ira became a dispersed tribe, with some groups migrating west to the Ōpōtiki and the Whakatāne area, and others shifting south into Waikaremoana, Hawke's Bay and the Wairarapa.

However, not all of Ngāti Ira migrated from the region. Some segments were able to consolidate themselves in the coastal and inland recesses of the Hikuwai Valley (near Pākaurangi) and Tokomaru Bay. There are some in the Te Tairāwhiti that staunchly claim Ngāti Ira descent and rightfully so, as the early history of the region is replete with marriages between people of Ngāti Ira stock and other tribal groupings we acknowledge today. Perhaps the fact that is less known is just how much Ngāti Ira blood runs through the veins of our people, and that discovery awaits those prepared to take the journey to find out.

Ngāti Ira – The Descendants of Ira

He tini pekeha ki te moana, ko Ngāti Ira ki uta
Like a multitude of petrels at sea, so are Ngāti Ira on land

NGĀTI Ira has had somewhat of a chequered history in the annals of Te Tairāwhiti, characterised by regular skirmishes with neighbouring iwi and a legacy of continuous displacement and resettlement.

Ngāti Ira are the descendants of Ira-kai-pūtahi, son of the renowned Hawaikian chief Uenuku and his wife Takarita. Uenuku was also the father of the illustrious Paikea, from his wife Rangatoro, and Ruatapu, from his slave wife Paimahutanga. The story of Paikea and Ruatapu appeared in the November 2007 issue of *Ngā Maunga Kōrero* — *Pukehāpopo and Whāngārā*.

Ira-kai-pūtahi, like Paikea and Ruatapu, was born about 1350AD. According to some sources, including Rongowhakaata Halbert and Wi Pewhairangi, Ira was part of the crew of the Horouta when it made landfall at Ōhiwa and Tūranga (Gisborne). Also part of the crew was Ira's father, Uenuku. Ira initially lived at Te Wharau (Score Point or Anzac Park) on the banks of the Waimata River, but went to live at Whāngārā at the invitation of his brother, Paikea. There, Ira set up the first whare-maire (school of the magic arts), called Wahakino, which stood on the site of the present cemetery. Paikea, meanwhile, had already set up his own wānanga in Whāngārā, called Whitireia, while his son, Rongomaitūaho, set up another wānanga, also in Whāngārā, called Te Ahomatariki.

It wasn't long before conflict arose between the three men and Ira eventually moved to the mouth of the Pākarae River where he set up another wānanga, called Te Wharau, the same name as his Tūranga house. However, after further discussion with Paikea, Ira moved and settled at the mouth of the Ūawa River where he set up another wānanga, named Nuku-te-auria.

In just over a century, Ira's descendants occupied all the inland



From Hikurangi in the north to Arowhana in the south.



recesses of the Tairāwhiti region. Of Ngāti Ira it is said,

He tini pekeha ki te moana, ko Ngāti Ira ki uta
Like a multitude of petrels at sea, so are Ngāti Ira on land

This whakataūki (proverb) is a reminder of the time when Ngāti Ira, like the petrel, literally swarmed over the land, covering the eastern slopes of the Raukumara Range from Hikurangi in the north to Arowhana in the south. A segment also inhabited the coastal area in and around Tūpāroa. At the same time the coastal stretch, from the Waiapu River south to Tūpāroa, was occupied by Te Wahineiti, then Ngāti Ruanuku in Whareponga and Wahineiti again from Waipiro to Whāngārā. Meanwhile, the coastal stretch from Waiapu north to Wharekahika (Hicks Bay) was inhabited by the descendants of Ruawaipu. As these groupings grew in number,

so did their demand for land and food resources. This would inevitably bring them into conflict with each other.

The period of greatest change and turmoil for Ngāti Ira, for that matter all iwi and hapū groupings in Te Tairāwhiti, occurred in the period 1575 to 1650. It was during this time that Hauiti asserted his authority over his elder brothers, Tāua and Māhaki-ewe-karoro, in the Ūawa district — this was continued by his son Kahukuranui; it was in this time that Tūwhakairiora conquered Ngāti Ruanuku in Whareponga and then Wahineiti in Waipiro with Pākānui; and it was also in this time that Ngāi Tūere, under Tamakoro and Uetaha, conquered Ngā Oho in Kawakawa (Te Araroa) and Wharekahika to reclaim the mantle of Ngāti Ruawaipu. All these conflicts had serious consequences for Ngāti Ira, who were generally caught in the crossfire of competing interests. The most notable of these conflicts was Te Pūeru Mākū (see story next page).

KŌRERO O TE TAIRĀWHITI

Ira-kai-pūtahi — Eat Your Heart Out

IRA-kai-pūtahi was the child of Uenuku, high chief of Hawaiki, and his wife Takarita. Ira's full name literally means "Ira the heart-eater" and is derived from an incident where, as a child, he was made to eat the heart of his mother. Apparently Takarita had committed adultery with Tumu-hūnuku and Tumu-hūrangī, who were brothers, and when this was discovered by Uenuku, he promptly dispatched her, cooked her heart and fed it to their child, Ira — and hence the name, Ira-kai-pūtahi.

When this news reached Takarita's brother, high chief Whena (or Tāwheta), he immediately hatched a plan to avenge her death. Whena invited five of Uenuku's children, from his wife

Rangatoro (also mother of Paikea), to accompany him on a fishing trip. While at sea, Whena killed all the children . . . at least, so he thought. They included the daughters — Mā-putu-ki-te-rangi, Māhina-a-te-ata, Ropanui and Inanga-matamea — while the only male child, Rongo-ua-roa, miraculously survived the attack and scrambled ashore to tell Uenuku what had happened.

Erangi rā ia ki te Rātōrua

It was different at Rātōrua

Ko tōna mōrehu

With its one survivor

Ka peke mai Rongo-ua-roa

For when Rongo-ua-roa leaped

I te purupuru o te waka

From the hull of the canoe

Ka paea ki uta

He drifted ashore

Uenuku didn't waste any time in organising a war party against Whena. Soon afterwards, two of Whena's sons were slain together with other prominent members of Whena's people, including Tāwhata, Poumātangatanga and Hāpopo. It was also during this campaign that Uenuku claimed Paimahutanga as a captive wife, and from this union was born Ruatapu.

Whena, however, still managed to elude the pursuing Uenuku. But finally, in the course of three major battles, Whena and his warriors were wiped out. The three battles where Whena

was defeated were called Rā-kūngia (the blotted out sun), Rā-tō-rua (the twice-setting sun) and Moana Waipū (the blood-red sea). Thus the death of Uenuku's children was avenged.

Following the battle, Uenuku returned to Tūranga where he presided over the wānanga named Wharekōrero. When he died he was buried in the Kohurau caves at Tuaheni Point at Wainui. The only visible reminder of Uenuku in the area now is the cemetery at Wainui which is called, Rākau-a-Ue — the Tree of Uenuku — so named when, through the power of magic, Uenuku caused the tree to wither. The tree and Uenuku have long gone but the cemetery remains — a lasting reminder of Uenuku, of Takarita and Ira-kai-pūtahi.



Tuaheni Point where once stood the caves of Kohurau, the burial place of Uenuku — father of Ira-kai-pūtahi.

Te Pūeru Mākū — The Wet Garments

THE incident described as *Te Pūeru Mākū — The Wet Garments* took place on Pākaurangi, the ancestral mountain of Ngāti Ira, located about 30 kilometres inland from Tolaga Bay. The incident followed the insult of Tāwhipare, the principal wife of Kahukuranui, eldest son of Hauiti, the eponymous ancestor of Te Āitanga-a-Hauiti tribe. Kahukuranui, who at this time (circa 1630AD) was living at Mārau, between Anaura Bay and Kaiāua Bay, had inherited the mana of his father and was busy consolidating his control over his father's estate. Meanwhile, the Ngāti Ira chief Pakāriki and his followers were encamped at Pākaurangi and Tūahu, which is adjacent to Pākaurangi.

Ngāti Ira were renowned for their kūmara (sweet potato) cultivations and one day Kahukuranui sent his wife, Tāwhipare, to Pākaurangi to ask for kūmara seed. Tāwhipare was quietly happy to have secured an ample supply of kūmara tubers to return home with, but was insulted by offers of kūmara of a different kind by some of the Ngāti Ira men. When she returned home she informed her husband of the insult. Kahukuranui, with his son Tautini, immediately made preparations to

rectify the indiscretion by Ngāti Ira.

A direct attack of Pākaurangi was out of the question as it was strongly fortified on a high hill with steep sides. A siege of the pā and waiting until their water ran out could take weeks if not months, unless water consumption could be accelerated. How could this be done? Kahukuranui directed his people to gather all varieties of seafood to gift to Ngāti Ira in return for their earlier donation of kūmara seed. This being done, he made the trip inland and presented the seafood to Ngāti Ira, but not before concealing his warriors at the nearby stream called Momo-te-wai.

Since the saltiness of seafood prompts thirst, it wasn't too long before Ngāti Ira emerged to fetch water from the stream. However, when these people failed to return, their chief, Pakāriki, knew they were well and truly besieged. In desperation, others sneaked out under the cover of darkness, soaking their cloaks in the water and returning to the pā where others could suck on the garments to quench their thirst. It was from this action that the name *Te Pūeru Mākū* was given to this incident. Although only delaying the inevitable, it did afford enough time for Pakāriki and his



The lower reaches of the Waiau and Hikuwai Valley, downhill from Pākaurangi.

followers to evacuate the pā.

When Kahukuranui and his warriors entered Pākaurangi the following morning they found the place deserted. Pakāriki and Ngāti Ira had, during the night, fled to Te Ana-a-Raparapa on the Waingaromia stream, but were expelled from there and also from Waihao on the Huiarua block by Kahukuranui. Further battles took place at the Manga-ma-tukutuku stream and at the junction of the Manga-māunu and Mātā rivers, where Ngāti Ira had taken refuge in the Whakataka pā. The pā and all its inhabitants, however, were destroyed — among the casualties were Pakāriki and his son Tāne-katohia. The bodies of Ngāti Ira were stacked in a heap and set on fire, but the heat merely scorched the skin of the bodies and thus this battle became known as Taokiri (scorched skin).

The battles of *Te Pūeru Mākū* at Pākaurangi and Taokiri at Whakataka pā marked the beginning of the end for Ngāti Ira. Those that survived became refugees in their own land, reliant on the protection of sympathetic kin,

whilst others migrated to the west and south. In the years that followed, many other skirmishes took place between factions of Ngāti Ira and neighbouring iwi and hapū until one of their leaders, Whakaumu, also followed in the wake of his earlier relatives and migrated south as well. After a brief stay at Ngā-whaka-tātara (near Taradale), Whakaumu and his followers journeyed on until they reached Te Rangi-whakama (Castle Point) in the Wairarapa. There Whakaumu met and married Hine-ipu-rangi, the daughter of the Rangitāne chief Whakamana. Ngāti Ira also merged with the Ngāi Tara people of the Wairarapa and Wellington area and today the two tribes are regarded as one and the same.

Ngāti Ira has mastered the art of survival and adapted to their surroundings, no matter where they have settled. From Te Tairāwhiti, to the Bay of Plenty, to Hawke's Bay, the Wairarapa and into Wellington, their resilience has withstood the test of time, a quality, no doubt, that will ensure their survival in the centuries to come. Mauri tū, mauri ora, mauri manawanui!



Tūahu, a Ngāti Ira pā adjacent to Pākaurangi.