

## THE GENESIS OF URIKARAKA

Urikaraka is a large hapu of the Ngati Paoa Iwi, a once powerful Hauraki tribe which, in the eighteenth century, dwelt mainly on the western shores of the Hauraki Gulf around where Kaiawa is today. The story of their origins begins with Te Mahia, the tribe's great leader in the latter part of that century. This story can be found in several places such as the Journal of the Polynesian Society, The Peopling of the North by S. Percy Smith, and Tainui by Leslie Kelly. There is also a short account in vol. 5 of The Ancient History of the Maori by John White. The following version has been taken from evidence given by several witnesses who appeared before the Maori Land Court in 1870 during the title investigation into the Orere and Taupo Blocks as recorded in Hauraki Minute No. 6. (Taupo was the name of a Maori village which was sited at the eastern end of Kawakawa Bay and this name also seems to have been applied to the coastline area between Orere Point and the mouth of the Wairoa River).

Te Mahia was an ariki (supreme chief) and also a great warrior of Tainui of western Hauraki. His wife, Mahora, also an ariki, was primarily of Ngati Tamatera but also of Ngapuhi (she was a descendant of Rahiri, an ariki of Ngapuhi, who was also an ancestor of Hone Heke, Tamati Waka Nene, Hongi Hika and Pomare). In their early years Te Mahia and Mahora lived at Parawhau, Whangarei, with northern relatives, and it was here their first children were born. But after a few years they relocated to Hauraki where they lived among Ngati Paoa and had four more children, Te Haupa, Te Waero, Pokai, all sons, and Tiatia, a daughter.

It was said in the court by one witness that Te Mahia was always fighting and never settled down, but another said that he lived at Wharekawa, on the western shores of Tikapa Moana (the Hauraki Gulf) and this is certainly more correct of his later years. Hikapore, a chief of the Waiohua tribe also living in this general area, went to Te Mahia and requested him to kill Ngatara, a chief of Ngatipou, who lived at Orere. Te Mahia had a long standing grudge against Ngatara and readily responded to Hikapore's proposal and his offer of support.

So Te Mahia took a war party by canoe to Orere and attacked Ngatara's pa, killing Ngatara himself and many of his people. Te Mahia did not occupy Ngatara's land but went back to Wharekawa, taking with him some of Ngatara's people to keep as slaves. At the time of this raid a group of Ngatipou men were away on a fishing expedition and escaped the slaughter. Among this group was Ngatara's son Tokowhero who was duty bound to avenge his father's death. He first of all killed many of his own people who had survived Te Mahia's raid in order to increase his own mana. Then he made a large canoe and with three others went north to seek assistance from Ngapuhi. They returned with a war party of Ngapuhi led by Te Ngare, a chieftainess from Mahurangi.

Te Mahia, on hearing of the arrival of the Ngapuhi war party, immediately gathered his warriors and proceeded to Taupo. However, he was killed in the ensuing battle along with many of his followers. As a final indignity, Te Mahia's body was hung in a karaka tree growing near the Taupo foreshore. Because of this event Te Mahia's descendants have become known as Te Urikaraka. Te Mahia's hapu was previously known as Ngati Hura but following his death, while Ngati Hura continued in existence, Urikaraka became the leading hapu of Ngati Paoa under his eldest son, Te Haupa.

Te Mahia's sons, of course, set out on revenge. They killed Te Ngare at Omaha and Te Urikaraka obtained Mahurangi and Matakana in a peace settlement. Hikapore, probably to save his own skin, ceded his lands to Urikaraka.

After the fighting Te Mahia's descendants and their families established themselves on the land previously occupied by Ngatara and Hikapore's people. Thus Urikaraka gained mana over an area which included Taupo (which for a time was tapu as the result of the death of Te Mahia), Rotopiro, Waitawa, Te Kawakawa and Orere. However, they permitted the remaining occupants to continue to live and cultivate this land. The Waiohua, probably the remnants of those driven from the Auckland isthmus by Ngati Whatua, became a landless tribe which was gradually absorbed by marriage with Urikaraka as did some of those Ngatipou who remained in Hauraki.

The Maori Land Court's decision confirmed that Urikaraka had become the rightful owners of Ngatara's land by conquest and Hikapore's land by ahi kaa (occupation).

Kelly wrote that these events took place about 1790 and that Te Mahia was beheaded before his body was hung in the karaka tree, his head being taken back to the Bay of Islands as a trophy. David Simmons (a former ethnologist at the Auckland Museum and an expert on Maori moko) has researched and identified Maori artifacts held in European museums. He was able to identify a tattooed head which had been in the museum in Whitby, North Yorkshire, since the 1830s as being that of Te Mahia. This Toi Moko (tattooed, dried, human head) was repatriated back to New Zealand about 2007. It is held by Te Papa, the Museum of New Zealand, in their Wahi Tapu (sacred repository) and, although it was able to be viewed by the public for many years at Whitby, for some inexplicable reason it can not be viewed in its homeland.

Notes:

1. It had been hoped to obtain an image of the Toi Moko to accompany this article but Te Papa has declined to provide one. The museum at Whitby has also been approached but was unable to comply with my request. The Auckland Museum holds the photograph taken by David Simmons at the Whitby Museum but is unable to locate it. The Toi Moko that is possibly that of Te Mahia was donated to the Whitby Museum in 1831 by Capt. Stephenson Ellerby of the ship Lady Feversham and forwarded to New Zealand House, London in 1997. The staff of Te Papa have not been un-cooperative but are continuing with their research on the several Toi Moko that have been repatriated with the aim of making a positive identification of each of them.
2. There is an excellent genealogical chart showing the connection of the various prominent families of Waikato and Hauraki in an article by George Graham titled "Pare Hauraki - Pare Waikato" which was published in the Journal of the Polynesian Society, Vol. 58, pp. 68 - 76. This chart, which begins with Hotunui of the Tainui canoe and includes Te Mahia, is too large to reproduce here but can be found on-line.
3. In a subsequent article I shall tell the story of Te Haupa, Te Mahia's eldest son, who succeeded him as the ariki of Ngati Paoa.