

CHAPTER 1

A SURVEY OF TRADITIONAL HISTORY IN WAIRARAPA

The Rangahaua Whanui report for each area has only been intended to provide a brief summary of the relevant traditional Maori history, being based on secondary sources. The rationale for this being that Maori from the area themselves are better qualified to provide this aspect of the history.

The tribal make-up of the Maori people inhabiting Wairarapa by the 1840s is more complex than the simple label 'Ngati Kahungunu' would imply. While the descendants of Kahungunu had extended over much of the area by the mid eighteenth century, they had not simply defeated and extirpated the previous peoples, such as Rangitane, Ngai Tahu, Ngati Ira, and others. The migrations resulted as much in alliances and intermarriage. Rangitane retained an important presence in parts of Wairarapa, particularly the north, at the time of the purchases.¹ The Hamua hapu, of North Wairarapa, was considered Rangitane, although many members could also trace their ancestry to Kahungunu. It predominated in the largest village in the valley, Kaikokirikiri, which was led by the famous Rangitane chief Retimona Te Korou.² When Kemp gathered information for a census in January 1849, he was aware of the distinct identity of Rangitane.³ The small village Te Hawera at the extreme head of the valley was described by Kemp as retaining a 'remnant of the old Rangitane'.

1. See H A Ballara, 'The Origins of the Ngati Kahungunu', 1991, and Crisp, 'The Maori Occupation of Wairarapa', *Journal of the Polynesian Society*, vol 102, no 1, March 1993

2. Ballara, pp 217ff

3. Kemp, 'Return', GBPP, vol 7, sess 1420, p 238. When referring to an individual at Kaikokirikiri, Kemp described him as a 'Rangitane'.

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Ballara, whose focus was on Ngati Kahungunu, listed the major hapu of the Wairarapa area as Ngati Kahuhuraawhitia, Ngati Moe, Rakaiwhakairi, as well as Hamua, Ngai Tamahau and Ngati Rangihakaewa in the north.⁴ Ballara's research has led her to argue that Ngati Kahungunu were politically fragmented in the early nineteenth century.⁵ Major chiefs ruled over autonomous communities, there was no such thing as a unified Ngati Kahungunu, much less Wairarapa Maori, leadership. Under the stresses of invasion from outside the area some regional feeling was developing in the 1830s, but Ballara has argued that with inter-tribal peace from 1839, Maori in the area returned to their old independent ways. Kemp's return seems also to indicate that hapu identity was the primary consideration in areas, for, according to it, the Maori at Turanganui spoke of themselves as Ngai Tahu.⁶ In the deeds of sale, however, Maori of the area were usually referred to simply as 'Ngati Kahungunu', even in deeds signed by prominent 'Rangitane' chiefs. This may reflect colonial simplifications and the fact that all Maori had complex ancestry and could associate with more than one iwi, as well as many hapu.

In the face of invasions from Te Ati Awa, Ngati Tama and Ngati Mutunga from the west, 'Wairarapa'⁷ Maori retreated first from the areas around Wellington, then after 1824 from Wairarapa itself. By 1833, the predominantly 'Ngati Kahungunu' had virtually completed their exile to Nukutaurua on the Mahia Peninsula. There they joined their northern neighbours of Hawke's Bay. Many Rangitane sought refuge in inland areas around the Manawatu gorge. The fighting ended in the late 1830s, and during 1841 and 1842 Wairarapa Maori began to return to the area after peace had 'broken out'. In March 1842, Pehi Tu-te-pakihi-rangi led some 400 people to Palliser Bay.⁸ From there they gradually moved up the valley. Only three years later the first Pakeha leaseholders drove their flocks into the same valley. Maori of the area needed to respond to the arrival of Europeans in the immediate aftermath of war, and when there was no guarantee that the old enemies would not return. Research needs to be done to determine whether any of the invaders of the 1830s remained in the district. It can only be said here that some interest was retained, and this was demonstrated by the later sale of that interest to McLean and the Crown.⁹

4. Ballara, p 167

5. Ibid, p 280

6. Kemp, 'Return', GBPP, vol 7, sess 1420, p 239

7. Quotation marks to show caution in use of term Wairarapa Maori at this time, because it assumes cohesion that did not necessarily exist.

8. P Husbands, 'Maori Population in the Hawke's Bay and Wairarapa, 1820-1991', report commissioned by the Waitangi Tribunal, 1992, p 11

9. Turton, *Maori Deeds*, deed 87, 29 August 1853, extinguished the claims of Wairarapa and East Coast Maori to Wellington for £100. Deed 121, 7 January 1854, extinguished the claims of Ngati Awa, Ngati Tama, and Ngati Toa to the lands of Wairarapa and lands adjacent thereto for £700.