

Statement of association to Turanganui Awa

The traditions of Rongowhakaata confirm the cultural, historical and spiritual importance of the Turanganui River to them. These traditions represent the links between the world of the Atua and present generations; reinforce Rongowhakaata tribal identity; and are continually expressed in whakapapa, waiata, korero and mahi toi.

The Turanganui River is of great cultural and historical importance to Rongowhakaata. The mauri of Turanganui river represents the essence that binds the physical and spiritual elements of all things together, generating and upholding all life. All elements of the natural environment possess a life force and all forms of life are related. Mauri is a critical element of the spiritual relationship of Rongowhakaata whanui to the Turanganui River to this day.

The values of mana, whakapapa, tapu and mauri define the relationship of Rongowhakaata with the Turanganui River. Mana defines the kaitiakitanga responsibilities of Rongowhakaata, within which Rongowhakaata is charged with protecting the Mauri or life force of Turanganui River. Whakapapa defines the genealogical relationship, while Tapu describes the sacredness of the relationship between Rongowhakaata and Turanganui River. These values remain important to the people of Rongowhakaata today.

Waka

Rongowhakaata whakapapa to various pre-migration iwi including Te Hapuoneone, Maruiwi, Nga Marama, Nga Maihi, Nga Potiki, Te Marangaranga and Te Tini o Toi, the multitude of Toi te Huatahi or Toi Kairakau as he is commonly known. From time to time, these groups also traversed the lands, rivers, mountains and forests of the Turanganui a Kiwa region. Rongowhakaata also trace descent from the ancestors of waka; Horouta, Takitimu, Ika nui a Rauru and Ruapani, from whom many important whakapapa lines of descent converge. Prior to the arrival of tauwiwi (European settlers), the tipuna of Rongowhakaata established

important communities all along the banks of the principal rivers of the region, including the Waikanae Stream.

When Horouta arrived from Hawaiki, it incurred some damage at Ohiwa, Eastern Bay of Plenty. In due course it was discovered that the repairs would not be completed and a skeleton crew led by Kiwa sailed the Horouta to this region. Whilst the others led by Paoa and Pouheni traversed the landscape. The waka eventually landed at Muriwai and Kiwa travelled to Turanga across the bay and selected the west bank of the Te Wai Wehe Rua as the rendezvous for Paoa and others. In commemoration of this decision Kiwa gave the region the name Turanga nui a Kiwa, “the time of waiting by Kiwa”

Te Wai Wehe Rua – the river of two estuaries, dividing into two branches, is the confluence of the Waimata and Taruheru rivers, and was the original name given to the Turanganui River. These watery corridors enabled the Tangata Whenua a transport route along and into the fertile plains of Turanganui a Kiwa.

It was the sacred waters from Te Wai Wehe Rua which that were used to bless the whare Matatuahu, which was erected for Hinehikirangi, on the western side of the Turanganui River. Hinehikirangi, the sister of Paoa, had the powers of cultivation and was the Kaitieki of the precious kumara tubers conveyed on the Horouta from the homeland.

Hinehikirangi felt the cold from the sea, and sent word to her brothers to come and build her a house inland from Te Muriwai. The whare Matatuahu then became the house of Matuatonga and Hamokiterangi. A puna wai was dug where the breast water of Hamo was sprinkled, the area around the low water was littered with pipi, and the name Heipipi was given to their kainga. The Pa Heipipi was maintained through the generations by various tipuna, Hiharore, the grandmother of Ruapani. Hiharore lived here and this is celebrated in the surrounding lands from the Waikanae River being named Waiohiharore. The puna wai, fresh water spring at the mouth of the Waikanae River is named ‘Te Wai o Hiharore’ also.

Maia, son in law of Hamo and Matuatonga when arriving at Turanganui a Kiwa landed his waka Te Ikaroa a Rauru on the Kaiti side at Tawa Raro, close to Tuamotu. He brought with him the precious hue seeds and was known also known to be gifted with certain powers. While living at his Pa, Puhi Kaiti, Maia frequently crossed the Turanganui River to visit his father in law, Matuatonga. He became well known for his less than friendly demeanour and his fractious manner. The young ones knew well to avoid him. A young girl, Taiao who descended from the waka Te Ikaroa a Rauru was summonsed by Maia, to bring her waka to convey him. Naturally cautious of this cantankerous man, Taiao hesitated but eventually complied with his demands. In a rage, Maia killed Taiao who was then changed into a large papa rock formation in the middle of the river. The people were saddened by the tragedy and the rock formation which resulted was given the name Te Toka a Taiao.

'Mo Te Toka a Taiao, he wahine'

I a ia te mauri o nga tipuna

I a ia te mauri o te awa, a Wai Wehe e Rua

I a ia te mauri o te moana, a Te Moannui a Kiwa

Te Toka a Taioa mauri ora mai mo ake ake tonu.

Te Toka a Taiao held the mauri for the kanae, mullet, attracting them to the Turanganui River, hence the name to the tributary opposite called Waikanae (waters of the Kanae, mullet).

Within the Turanganui were numerous rock formations, which combined with the tidal flows made a habitat for a variety of; tuna, inanga, kahawai, fish, kina, paua, koura, pipi, kanae, patiki and kutae flourishing abundantly in its reef like environment.

There at the junction of the rivers Nga Wai Wehe Rua, stood Te Toka a Taiao, with the tributaries Waikanae River from the south and Kopuawhakatapa Stream from the north. The

tipuna wahine, Te Toka a Taiao, sat sentinel near the river mouth and she would receive the many waka as they berthed, also enabling a place from which to launch many waka.

The Turanganui River though the shortest in the southern hemisphere was profoundly rich in kaimoana. Rongowhakaata traditions acknowledge Te Toka a Taiao as a mauri and taonga to the many Hapu.

To the anger and abhorrence of Rongowhakaata Te Toka a Taiao was blasted for Gisborne Harbour purposes, Harbour authorities stated, 'they were warned by the natives that, if they interfered with it, disaster would attend their efforts. Some natives professed to believe that the Harbour troubles which followed were due to the removal of the rock.'

Taniwha

Pipitaiari is a Taniwha of special significance to Rongowhakaata who inhabits the Turanganui River. Her domain extended from the Turanganui River to Te Arai, encompassing the waterways and moana of Turanganui a Kiwa, where she traversed freely returning always to the Turanganui River. Pipitaiari's mana and reputation was widely respected by the Hapu and Iwi of Te Tairāwhiti.

'Kake mai koe i runga o Pipitaiari parera to hua'

Anyone who comes with ill thoughts into the area, their powers will be removed.

Such was the recognition given to her, that when Wiremu Ratana, at the height of his powers, travelled into the Turanganui a Kiwa region and the people were waiting for him at Muriwai, they pleaded with him not to go any further because of the power of Pipitaiari. Ratana replied; "Me uru noa ake e au I nga wai o Pipitaiari"

Many generations of Rongowhakaata hapu have lived on the banks of the Turanganui River which abuts the Waikanae, Turanganui, Whataupoko and Kai iti lands. The hapu who

occupied these lands are Whanau a Iwi, Ngai Tawhiri, Ngai te Kete and whanaunga Ngati Oneone.

The first encounter with Europeans was revealed by the matakite, visionary, Toiroa of Nukutaurua, Te Mahia had foreseen the coming of the 'Pakerewha' – Pakeha. Tragedy came, 100 years later with Captain Cook and the Endeavour - it is believed that Te Toka a Taiao, the sacred rock was the actual meeting place of Cook and the iwi of Turanganui-a-Kiwa. On the beach near the out-let of the Turanganui River the first contact between Rongowhakaata and a new tribe they had never seen before took place. For Rongowhakaata, the encounter with the strangers was brief and violent. Captain Cook was responsible for the unnecessary slaying of Rongowhakaata Rangatira Te Rakau and Marukauiti

Trade

The first trading stations established at the permission of Rongowhakaata, provided Rongowhakaata Hapu with an opportunity to engage in trading and sharing of resources, with other hapu, Iwi and European Traders. By late 1831 the first European trading stations were established at the Turanganui River and Wherowhero Lagoon. Sailing vessels were able to navigate from the seaward mouth of Turanganui River through Nga Wai Wehe Rua and take the course of the Taruheru or Waimata Rivers. Hapu participated well in this new economy, commodities were supplied and transported through the Turanganui River. Rongowhakaata Iwi evolved as Hapu investment in several trading ships, saw them transporting crops of harvested flax, wheat, corn, meats and also settlers goods, as far afield as Auckland and Australia. The Turanganui River was an integral part of the trade highway of the new 'Tairawhiti economy' with Ngai Tahwiri, Whanau a Iwi and Ngai te Kete and the other Rongowhakaata Hapu having custodial rights.

The Turanganui River was also the main gateway into the fertile Turanga plains. The River was the pivotal in the transportation of people, resources and materials. In more recent times its importance as a food resource grew, when it was relied upon for the sustenance it provided within a growing urban environment.

The Turanganui river is the repository of koiwi Tangata, Urupa are the resting places of Rongowhakaata tipuna and, as such, are the focus of whanau traditions. Urupa and wahi tapu are places holding the memories, traditions, victories and defeats of Rongowhakaata tipuna and are frequently protected in secret locations. Urban development has disturbed the tipuna koiwi in recent years on what was the original Heipipi Pa.

Rongowhakaata tipuna had considerable knowledge of whakapapa, traditional trials and Tauranga waka, places for gathering kai, rongoa maori and other taonga, ways in which to use the resources of the Turanganui River, the relationship with the people with the area and their dependence on it, and Tikanga for the proper and sustainable utilisation of resources. All of these values remain important to the people of Rongowhakaata today.