

3: STATEMENTS OF ASSOCIATION

Balance of the Tutira Domain Recreation Reserve (as shown on deed plan OTS-201-30)

The Balance of the Tutira Domain Recreation Reserve (the Reserve) comprises most of the margins of the Lakes Tūtira, Waikōpiro and Orakai. The Reserve and environs are of great cultural, spiritual and historic significance to Ngāti Marangatūhetaua (Ngāti Tū) and Ngāti Kurumōkihi (formerly known as Ngāi Tatara). The following statements of association are relevant to the Reserve.

- Sandy Creek and its tributaries; and
- Mahiaruhe Stream and its tributaries.

Sandy Creek is the official name; it is known to the Hapū as Papakiri Stream. Part of the Mahiaruhe Stream is also known to the Hapū as Tūtira Stream.

Spiritual importance

The Tūtira area, including Lakes Tūtira, Waikōpiro and Orakai, is a renowned taonga (treasure) of Ngāti Kurumōkihi. The lakes have a mauri (life force) of their own. This mauri binds the spiritual world with the physical world. All elements of the natural world have mauri and it is this mauri that connects Ngāti Kurumōkihi with the lakes. Mauri is therefore the basis of the spiritual relationship of Ngāi Kurumōkihi with this area.

Lake Tūtira was also regarded by the Hapū as being a particularly spiritual area. The Hapū have a whakatauākī (tribal proverb) about the lake being:

“ko te waiū o ō tātau tīpuna” – “the milk of our ancestors”.

This whakatauākī is not just a reference to the abundance of kai (food) that could be sourced from the lake. It also referred to the lake providing spiritual sustenance. Accordingly, the physical and spiritual well-being of the Hapū is closely linked to the well-being of Lake Tūtira.

Cultural importance

Orakai and Waikōpiro are regarded as the “eyes of Tūtira”.

The Tūtira area, lakes, waterways and adjoining lands formed the central hub of a series of well-known and used tracks linking the Hapū with Tangitū (the sea in the east) and Maungaharuru (the Maungaharuru Range in the western interior). The Hapū were mobile, and their seasonal gathering gave rise to the Hapū whakatauākī:

“Ko tō rātau pā kai ngā rekereke” – “their fortified villages were in their heels”.

Various natural resources at Tūtira were celebrated by the Hapū. There was an abundance of bird life. Harakeke (flax) from Tūtira was renowned for its strength and was traded with whalers. It was very good for weaving whāriki (mats) and korowai (cloaks). The lake bed was paved with kākahi (freshwater mussels) and the flavour of the tuna (eels) was unsurpassed.

Tūtira was famous for its tuna. The lakes, the adjoining wetlands and the surrounding awa (rivers) were heaving with tuna. Tuna were speared in the lakes, or caught in where tuna (eel houses) or pā tuna (tuna weirs) built along the edges of the awa. More recent traditions recount how the whānau (families) of Tangoio would travel to Tūtira in February – March after the second big rain to trap and spear tuna. This is the time of ‘te rere o ngā tuna’ - ‘the migration of the eels’. Whānau would prepare the pā tuna along the outlet to Lake Tūtira waiting for the tuna to begin their journey

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to spawn out at sea. Once caught, the tuna would be prepared and the tuna pāwhara (dried eels) would be shared amongst the wider Tangoio community. Today, the tuna at Tūtira are a small fraction of the numbers that used to populate the lakes, wetlands and awa. They are also known to be an aging population as there are few, if any, juveniles present in the lakes or awa.

Some rongoā (medicinal plants), were only found in or around Lake Tūtira. For example, particular harakeke (flax) was used in pre and post birthing of children, and cleansing the blood. It was, and remains, critical that rongoā is harvested from 'clean' areas or water. The site for harvesting must be free of contamination. Rongoā cultural knowledge and treatment are still practised today, however the harvesting of rongoā from Tūtira is now non-existent because the rongoā that was there is nearly depleted and the lakes and their awa are polluted.

The Hapū also carried out ceremonies and rituals at designated places at Tūtira, such as tohi (baptisms). However, such ceremonies have not been performed for several generations, again, due to the state of the lakes and awa.

In the northern edge of Lake Tūtira, lies the log Te Rewa-a-Hinetu. As its name Rewa (the floater) implies, it is endowed with the power of moving from spot to spot. Its approach to Tautenga, a rock, was a particularly bad omen, and would signal a death in the Hapū.

Te Rewa-a-Hinetu is a branch of a rākau (tree) named Mukakai, which has travelled from the South Island up the coast to Otaki; another branch rests in Lake Wairarapa, another at Tikokino, and another at Te Putere. The presence of any portion of this eminent tree is said to be indicative of abundance. With its disappearance the food supply of the Hapū is said to dwindle and diminish.

Where Tūtira was a place of abundance, it is now resource poor. Ngāti Kurumōkihi, as kaitiaki (guardian) has the responsibility to take care of places, natural resources and other taonga within its takiwā (traditional area). Central to these responsibilities is the maintenance of customary practices and the sustainable use of natural resources. This kaitiaki role is an all-encompassing one, providing for the protection of biodiversity, the utilisation and maintenance of resources, for present and future generations and the restoration and enhancement of damaged ecosystems. Decisions about how to look after taonga species and places within the takiwā are based on mātauranga (knowledge). Mātauranga associated with the collection of resources was central to the lives of the Hapū and remains a significant part of the cultural identity of the Hapū today. Mātauranga and associated tikanga (customs), karakia (prayers) and kawa (rules) are all essential for maintaining customary traditions - the ritual and tapu (sacredness) associated with gathering and utilising resources.

Kōrero tuku iho - historical importance

The Tūtira area and the Reserve, are densely populated with sites of significance to Ngāti Kurumōkihi. Major areas of occupation within or nearby the Reserve include the pā of Te Rewa-o-Hinetu, Oporae and Tauranga-kōau which are still identifiable today.

Te Rewa-o-Hinetu pā, is located on the south eastern part of Lake Tūtira and between Lakes Tūtira and Waikōpiro. Te Rewa-o-Hinetu pā was a large and fortified spur which almost completely separated Lakes Tūtira and Waikōpiro. It had natural defences including three sides that were either impenetrable marsh, or water, and its fourth approach being guarded by a maioro (trench and bank). Nearby, remnants of reed-thatched huts, sunken waka, middens, and waka traffic on the adjacent shore remain today. Within the vicinity of Te Rewa-o-Hinetu is a significant wāhi tapu, as Tataramoa, the eponymous ancestor for Ngāi Tataara (later known as Ngāti Kurumōkihi) is believed to be buried there.

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Oporae pā is a small peninsula on the eastern shores of Lake Tūtira. It too benefited from the natural defence of water on three sides and a maioro on its fourth side.

Tauranga-kōau is the island off the east shore of Lake Tūtira and was the site of another pā. Tauranga-kōau featured in a prominent attack upon Ngāi Tātara and its chief of that time, Tiwaewae. Although Tiwaewae was killed by the warparty, Ngāi Tātara boldly held the pā. The siege endured until the tohunga (high priest) of the Hapū went to Te Ahu – the altar of Tunui-a-te-ika, to invoke their tribal deity. Their deity appeared “like a comet” and travelled southwards towards the **tīhi tapu (the sacred peak) of Te Puku** (located at the southern end of Waikōpiro), to guide the escape of Ngāi Tātara. There were not enough waka (canoes) so it was decided that the men and boys would escape on the waka, leaving the women and girls in the pā. The men and boys passed through the narrows of Ohinepaka (at that time the opening between Lakes Tūtira and Waikōpiro), and they landed on the east edge of Waikōpiro, where they sank their waka. Tauranga-kōau pā was besieged by the attackers on mōkihi (rafts), and because of this event Ngāi Tātara become known as Ngāti Kurumōkihi (those attacked by rafts). The women and girls were taken ashore as prisoners at a nearby site called Te Papa-o-Waiatara. Following this incident, Ngāti Kurumōkihi mounted numerous attacks to avenge the death of Tiwaewae.

As a prized taonga, many raids were made on Lake Tūtira. However, Ngāti Kurumōkihi have another whakatauaākī, “Tūtira upoko pipi” – “Tūtira, the place where heads became soft”, commemorating the success of Ngāti Kurumōkihi in defending Tūtira, their prized taonga. Tribal archives record that, other than the death of Tiwaewae, no other rangatira (chiefs) were ever taken and every raiding party was beaten.

Ngāti Kurumōkihi, and Ngāti Tū before them, have maintained ahi-kā-roa (long occupation) at Tūtira. The continued recognition of the Hapū, their identity, traditions and status as kaitiaki is entwined with the Reserve, and associated resources.