

Ngati Whare at the end of the Wars

In the last Ngati Whare panui we looked at the experience of Ngati Whare during the fighting at Orakau (1864), Te Tapiri (1865) and the attack on Te Harema pa at Te Whaiti by Colonel Whitmore (1869). For this panui, we will continue the story of Ngati Whare at end of the war period, when Ngati Whare “came in” and surrendered to the government. The next panui will continue the story of Ngati Whare after the surrender, discussing the creation of Te Whitu Tekau, the work of the Native Land Court, and later, the visit of Seddon to Te Whaiti in 1894.

The relationship between Ngati Whare and Te Kooti has always been important. When first in the Urewera, Te Kooti lived for a while at Te Harema pa near Te Whaiti. After Whitmore's attack on Te Harema in May 1869 and the forced removal of many Ngati Whare women and children to Te Putere near Whakatane, a number of Ngati Whare men accompanied Te Kooti when he travelled to Taupo, the Waikato, through Rotorua and back to the Urewera. This group included the Ngati Whare rangatira Hamiora Potakurua and Hapurona Kohi (Hapurona was taha rua Ngati Whare and Tuhoe, and had played a leading role in the battles of Orakau and Te Tapiri).

The story of Te Kooti's adventures, fights, pursuit and negotiations with different iwi at this time have been told by Judith Binney in her book “Redemption Songs”. With hindsight, we can assume that Ngati Whare's support for Te Kooti was seen as a way to protect their lands and to resist the ever-growing colonial presence in New Zealand. Ngati Whare were certainly afraid of land confiscation, which had been applied to other iwi such as Ngati Awa. Some were also afraid that they would be deported to the Chatham Islands, as had happened in Turanga. There may also have been an element of fear or awe among Ngati Whare, however, as Te Kooti wielded considerable power as a prophet and leader.

By early 1870, however, the Ngati Whare position, as with Tuhoe generally, had become untenable. Many of the women and children of Ngati Whare continued to be held at Te Putere. With Te Kooti's return to the Urewera (he stopped again at Te Whaiti) the government renewed its military pressure on those who had remained in the ranges, organising Maori leaders such as Wahawaha to launch attacks.

Further support for Te Kooti would bring further reprisals from the Crown, therefore. The government also made it clear that if Maori in the Urewera did not voluntarily surrender, they would be treated

under the Disturbed Districts Act 1869. This meant being charged with ‘high treason’ and possibly executed. A massive reward of £5000 was also put on Te Kooti's head.

Te Kooti, though, soon moved out into the Waioueka area, east of the Urewera. Further fighting took place there. Then, in March 1870, a peace agreement was reached between the Tuhoe rangatira, Tamaikoha, and the government's Maori ally, Te Keepa Te Rangihiwini (Kemp) of Whanganui, who was leading one of the mainly Maori forces scouring the region. The essence of the agreement was that government forces would stay out of the Urewera and the Urewera would remain neutral, and not support Te Kooti. Ngati Whare leaders supported this peace agreement, writing to Gilbert Mair in April, explaining that Te Kooti was no longer in the area. Te Kooti himself was later asked by Tuhoe to stay away.

On 24 April, Paraone Te Tuhi of Ngati Whare, accompanied by a small group of five men, three women and nine children, “came in” and surrendered to Gilbert Mair and George Preece at Fort Galatea. Gilbert Mair had been patrolling the western side of the Urewera with a contingent mostly of Te Arawa, but also of Ngati Manawa. Te Tuhi told Preece, “*I am the rope, pull me and the horse will follow.*”

‘Keepa's peace’, however, was broken when Colonel St John attacked Tamaikoha's supporters in late April. This made other Tuhoe and Ngati Whare leaders quite reluctant to surrender. Letters were then exchanged between the two sides, with Te Meihana (who was of both Ngati Whare and Ngati Manawa) acting as a mediator between the government forces and the main group of Ngati Whare, as well as with Tuhoe up at Ruatahuna.

On 20 May, the main body of Ngati Whare, accompanied also by a number of Ngati Awa, “came in” to Fort Galatea. The group included around 30 fighting men, and 22 women and children. Hapurona Kohi and Hamiora Potakurua were part of the group.

At the end of June, Hapurona Kohi agreed to act as a negotiator to help “bring in” other Tuhoe, particularly those at Ruatahuna. He had been reassured by Mair that no further land confiscations would take place. A large hui was held at Ruatahuna, followed soon after by the reluctant surrender of Ngati Haka / Patuheuheu.

Despite promises of peace, fighting did not cease, though – the government launched another attack, this time on the Waikaremoana side, where great stores of food were destroyed. This ultimately led to the “coming in” of some of the hapu of that area.

In late June, Hapurona returned to Ruatahuna, accompanied this time by Hamiora Potakurua. They again reassured Tuhoe of what they had been told – that no confiscations would take place. This hui, and a hui that followed, saw a few more small groups “surrender”.

But on the whole, the balance of Tuhoe at Ruatahuna were reluctant to leave their homes. They continued to insist that they had nothing to do with Te Kooti, and they had little trust of the government. It was only a harsh winter through August, the great shortage of food and clothing, and an outbreak of influenza which killed many, that drove a number of remaining small groups out, down to the coast to Whakatane.

Those Ngati Whare and Ngati Haka / Patuheuheu who surrendered earlier in May and June were put under the “protection” of Ngati Awa, Te Arawa and Ngati Manawa chiefs, and made to live near the coast, at Te Putere. Life there was harsh. The soil was poor, sandy and swampy, and there was little ability to plant food and no tools to do so. Some government supplies were given, but these were not adequate for everyone’s support. When Hapurona and Potakurua met with Donald McLean in early 1871, they pointed this out, asking for better land, food and clothing.

In January 1871, Ropata Wahawaha was employed by the government to conduct yet another sweep of the Urewera, and to concentrate Tuhoe any survivors at Ruatahuna, where they would be watched over. A series of hui were held between Wahawaha and Tuhoe chiefs, including Te Whenuanui and Paerau, who by April agreed to co-operate with the government by rejecting Te Kooti. Hapurona Kohi also attended the hui, coming up from Galatea, where he had been staying.

At this time the government wanted Tuhoe to assist in the capture of Te Kooti, but Tuhoe asked that they simply stay at Ruatahuna. Despite this agreement, those Ngati Whare and Tuhoe who were being kept at the coast, and elsewhere (such as Napier), were not allowed to return home.

Interestingly, through this time, a small group of Ngati Whare had remained living near Ahikereru, keeping the Ngati Whare fires alight on the land. George Preece spoke with this group in early 1871, when he was told that Ngati Whare had been in contact with Ngati Kahungunu, and had accepted a flag of peace from them (some Kahungunu were employed to hunt for Te Kooti). The group had also heard news that Te Kooti was planning a new attack, although they did not know where.

This prompted the formation of yet another “scouring” party, made up mostly of Te Arawa and captained by George Preece and Gilbert Mair. The party was accompanied also by Hapurona Kohi, who appears to have been acting as a kind of diplomat at the time, and travelled to Ruatahuna, Waikaremoana, Maungapohatu, and back to Ohiwa harbour on the coast. Te Kooti’s location was not found, although it appears that he sheltered at various places around Lake Waikare-moana. Yet further searches were attempted through the winter of 1871, all without success.

Te Kooti’s continuing presence in the Urewera was unsettling for Tuhoe. It appears that few wanted to see Te Kooti apprehended, but at the same time continued pressure from government forces (including Mair and Wahawaha) meant that open support could not be given. At the same time, information was given to the government of Te Kooti’s presence at various places.

In October 1871, however, a Tuhoe group lead by Te Whenuanui and Paerau located and attacked Te Kooti at Pukehinau, on the Okahu stream just south of Te Whaiti. Te Kooti seems to have moved there after staying around Waikaremoana. There are different stories about the encounter. Te Kooti was shot at, but the bullet did not hit him, rather it severed his cartridge belt. He managed to escape yet again.

There was one other person who the government wanted to apprehend – Kereopa. Kereopa had been hiding at Te Rou in the upper reaches of the Whakatane River, near Tahora. He was finally captured in November 1871 with the assistance of some Tuhoe from Ruatahuna. Kereopa’s capture (he was later tried and hanged for murder) appears to have warmed the hearts of some government officials towards Tuhoe. Correspondence between Tuhoe chiefs and Ormond, the government agent in the Hawkes Bay, speak of an arrangement, where Tuhoe would be left alone to manage themselves, as long as they kept Te Kooti out, or gave him up if he came within their boundaries. This was a change from neutrality to active support, albeit under duress.

After the fight at Pukehinau, Te Kooti further eluded his Tuhoe and government pursuers, travelling across to the upper Waiau river, then to the upper Mohaka river, and across again to the upper Wairoa river, near Nuhaka. He then cut back through the Urewera, to Te Whaiti, leaving the region by crossing the Rangitaiki river close to Fort Galatea. Te Kooti finally reached the sanctuary of the King Country, where he lived with the blessing of Rewi Maniapoto, in May 1872. He stayed there until his pardon in 1883.

The departure of Te Kooti meant a final peace between the government and Ngati Whare and Tuhoë. On 15 April 1872, Donald McLean visited Whakatane, and a hui was held with the prisoners who had been kept, some now for nearly three years, at Te Putere. Ngati Whare and others were told that they could, finally, go home. Their unhappy detention and imprisonment was over.