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## THE URUPA AT WAIMARAMA, HAWKE'S BAY

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In March 1997 a burial ground containing the remains of at least six relatively complete individuals of Polynesian origin was uncovered at Waimarama, Hawke's Bay when heavy seas exposed a row of graves in an eroding sand dune. In July two more individuals were revealed. The people had been buried in a Christian manner: lying prostrate either in coffins or on planks, adjacent to a Maori Reserve, but in no known urupa. Every one was perplexed by the questions: "Who were these people and why has their urupa been forgotten?" This paper offers a possible explanation.

The first indication of the presence of human remains was when a bone was found on the beach on Thursday evening. The police were called on Friday morning and after examining the bone and the skeleton from Grave 1 said the bones were Maori and the Maori people could rebury them. On Friday afternoon the people of the Waimarama Maori community removed full skeletons from Graves 2,4 and 5 and partial skeletons from Graves 3, 7 and 8. The skeletons were then taken to the undertakers Dillon and Noho, while a decision was made about their reburial.

On Saturday morning seven graves could be identified, spread in a line 12.8 m long. The profiles were quite obvious although most of the bones had been extracted from them. While the graves were being examined another wave rushed up the beach and dislodged a large piece of the bank revealing another grave: No. 8. This grave was smaller, narrower and not as deep as the other graves. This grave was then excavated, without an authority from the Trust because it was imperative that something was done immediately as the site was being eroded rapidly as we watched. The sand was removed from about a third of the way above the base of the grave and then the area was excavated until the

skeleton of a small child encased in the remains of a coffin was reached. The skull had collapsed. The skeleton was removed almost intact along with the surrounding sand and coffin remains by working a board in underneath it. The body had been laid east-west with its feet towards the sea (east). Meanwhile some men were searching in the adjacent grave 7 because half a skeleton had been removed from it on the previous day. When they found a vertebra and a belt buckle with a piece of leather attached to it we decided to reveal it *in situ*. This also entailed excavating above the position of the skeleton and working down onto it. The skull and upper body were exposed. This body was also lying in a west to east position. The skeleton was photographed and removed. The tide was coming in rapidly.

The graves were obviously from the post-contact period. They were European-style burials: in a row, relatively evenly spaced, between 1200 mm and 1500 mm below the present surface, in wooden coffins, lying with their feet towards the east and with a European artefact (the belt buckle) associated with one of the skeletons. Several days later a clay pipe, which had been found by Grave 3, was given to the author but its exact location could not be established.

Dr Lisa Matisoo-Smith from the Anthropology Department at Auckland University came to Napier to identify the skeletons. It was not possible to identify each skeleton with the grave from which it came because of the methods used to uncover them. Matisoo-Smith said in her report that:

"The material consisted of the complete or near complete remains of six individuals, and two small collections of miscellaneous fragments found near the skeletons. After analysis of cranial, dental and post cranial features it was determined that all six individuals were of Polynesian/Maori origin. ... [There was] one small child (20-40 months of age), one young adult male, one adult female and three adult males. All the adults showed clear cranial and post-cranial characteristics typical of Polynesian/Maori populations. In general the tooth wear of the adults was minimal with the exception of Individual 5, which is typical of prehistoric Maori populations. Those involved in the excavation of the material reported that the burial positioning of Individuals 1-6 was typical of Christian burial. Wood fragments were found with all the skeletons, consistent with burial in coffins. Artefacts found with the burials (a belt buckle and a clay pipe) also suggest that these do not represent prehistoric burials. The presence of Individual 5 with the typical prehistoric tooth wear patterns, may indicate that these burials represent a period during the early historic period." (Matisoo-Smith, n.d. : 1-2)

When the analysis was completed the skeletons were all returned to the undertakers to be prepared for re-interment in the Maori cemetery at Waimarama. There was considerable interest from the media and on the day of the reburial there was strong pressure from television to film the skeletons. However, after lengthy debate, tangata whenua refused to allow this to take place. All the skeletons were put into a single coffin surmounted with a large wreath, donated by the undertakers, and taken to Waimarama Marae. The coffin was borne onto the marae by six men of Waimarama and laid on the verandah of the whareniui. The author had the unusual experience of following behind the coffin and then being directed to sit with the coffin and the kuia while the service was conducted, then greeting the people she had arrived with. There were many people at this ceremony which was a very moving and appropriate conclusion to the whole matter. The coffin was interred in a corner of the Maori cemetery at Waimarama.

In July two more graves were exposed. There was sufficient time to apply for an authority from the Historic Places Trust as well as permission from the Ministry of Health before these two graves were excavated. Grave 9 was between Graves 7 and 8. It was only 490 mm deep and 340 mm wide. There were fragments of wood on the base and northern side of the grave. A very small child was buried in this grave. Grave 10 was 1000 mm deep and 400 mm wide north of grave 9. It contained the skeleton of a large adult. It was not possible to fully expose these graves because of a condition in the authority requiring the least impact on the site. The remains were removed using a "burrowing" method. Neither of these two skeletons was scientifically analysed, although Dr Matisoo-Smith had confirmed that a single bone extracted from Grave 9 prior to excavation was the femur of a small child. These two individuals were interred in the same grave as the first, but in a separate small wooden box, after a very simple ceremony attended by the author, three adults and the children from the Kohanga Reo.

Archaeological site W22/181 is on part of Hastings District Council's Recreation Reserve between the beach and the baches on Harper Road. It is adjacent to the boat ramp on the Maori Reserve just north of the mouth of the Paparewa Stream which flows out by Kuku Rocks. Kuku Rocks is the only boat launching place at Waimarama. A kuia from Waimarama, Mrs Lovey McDonald, who is in her eighties, said there was no local knowledge of an urupa there. She is the youngest of 13 children. When she was a young girl (in the 1920s) her mother, who had been brought up in Waimarama, had been concerned about the bad feelings that were in the area, so she had arranged for a tohunga to come from Rotorua to bless the burial places and other wahi tapu.

Mrs McDonald was adamant that her mother could not have known of this urupa because the tohunga did not bless this place. Additional confirmation of this is that the Maori people had a boat shed close by, just on their reserve, and used to have picnics on the burial ground, which they would not have done if they had known it to be an urupa.

The clay pipe was identified by Don Millar, Honorary Curator of Ethnology at the Hawke's Bay Museum, as being characteristic of the pipe shape known as the "Churchwarden" type. he said "A slight curve in the stem remnant suggests that the complete pipe may have been of the [older style] long-stemmed Churchwarden type, however there is insufficient stem length remaining to be certain of this" (Millar n.d: 1). These pipes were produced in Britain and Europe from c.1700 onwards but were largely replaced by the more ornate "character" pipes from the 1860s. The pipe was sent to Dr Nigel Prickett of Auckland Museum for confirmation of the identification. Prickett also examined the belt buckle but could see no distinguishing marks which might determine its age.

The skeletal evidence, the pipe, the European style burials and the lack of knowledge of the urupa among the older Maori residents of Waimarama indicate that the burials are probably from the period c.1840 to c.1860.

The establishment of Christianity at Waimarama by the mid 1840s is well documented. William Colenso, of the Church Missionary Society, was the first resident missionary in Hawke's Bay. He began his Mission Station at Waitangi (Awatoto, on the coast 6 km south of Napier) in December 1844. In March 1845 Colenso recorded visiting Waimarama, having "promised the Natives of this village to spend the Sabbath with them..." The next day he held a service in one of the huts (because there was no chapel) for about twenty people, followed by school for twenty scholars: 7 adults in the first class and 13 in the second class. (Colenso Diary: 3.3.1845).

By May 1849 Colenso was able to say that the chief and native teacher, Walker Papaka, had just rebuilt the chapel and it was "filled with an orderly congregation of upwards of 100 souls." He baptised 35 candidates including the six widows and three daughters of Tiakitai, his aged mother, the wife of Tuahu the principal chief of the place and the sister and eldest daughter of Hadfield Tatere. Tatere was a Christian chief whose sister Puma married William Edwards, described by Colenso as "a quiet Englishman who has lived on these shores for nearly ten years." Edwards had a whaling station at Pututaranui at the

northern end of Waimarama between 1845 and 1846 (Colenso Diary: 12.5.1849).

Colenso recounted a tragedy which happened to Edwards that indicates that Maori were burying their dead according to European burial customs by 1847. Edwards' son was burnt to death in 1847 after Edwards had given up his whaling station and moved to the shore of Hawke Bay. "Edwards came with his wife and children and the charred trunk of the poor child – he seemed truly wretched. Last year he was unsuccessful in his whaling and now he is worse off than ever. Gave them some food – wood and nails to make a coffin – interred the child..."(Colenso Diary: 21.1.1847).

Father Lampila of the Roman Catholic Mission was making converts in Heretaunga (Hawke's Bay) in October 1844, three months prior to Colenso's arrival. Catholicism was established on the East Coast from mid-1841 when Bishop Pompallier visited Whakatane, Opotiki and Mahia as part of his consolidation and expansion of the Roman Catholic Mission. (Dunmore 1992: 47.) A large population of Heretaunga Maori were still living at Nukutaurua, Mahia, having gone there for the protection of the Nga Puhi chief, Te Wera Hauraki, who had settled there in the 1820s and continued to live and rule there until his death in 1839. Te Wera was an extremely able war leader but he is remembered even more for his wisdom, kindness and generosity to his adopted people of Mahia and the other thousands from Heretaunga and Wairarapa who took refuge on the peninsula during the unstable times of the 1820s and 1830s. On his death he was lamented over by all the tribes of the East Coast (Department of Internal Affairs 1990: 518-520).

It was while living at Nukutaurua that many Heretaunga people were converted to Christianity: either the Roman Catholic or Anglican (Church Missionary Society) denominations. People started returning to Hawke's Bay during the early 1840s bringing their new religious beliefs and practices with them. Colenso noted on 18 August 1845 when he was at Waimarama that he had heard the "tinkling bell of the few Papists (lately come from Table Cape [Mahia]) sounding forth its trivial summons..." (Grant 1977 : 26-7). It appears the CMS converts easily outnumbered the Roman Catholic ones and there were never many Catholics at Waimarama. The Register of Births, Deaths and Marriages held at St Mary's Church Taradale, shows three deaths, one marriage and eight baptisms at Waimarama for the years 1850 to 1876.(Grant 1977: 30) It is therefore unlikely that this urupa is that of a group of Roman Catholics for there are too many graves for the recorded population.

Evidence given in the Porangahau Case (MLC Minute Book 14) may reveal the solution to the questions raised earlier. Wi Matua and Henare Matua, both of Porangahau, gave evidence which indicates these graves may belong to people from Porangahau, not Waimarama, which would account for the loss of knowledge of the urupa by the tangata whenua of Waimarama.

Wi Matua said that some of the people ( Ngati Kere, Ngati Manuhiri and Ngati Hinetewai) who were returning to Porangahau from Nukutaurua stopped at Waimarama overnight and then continued on in their canoes as far as Parimahu, where they landed. However some of the people including Hoani Matua, Henare Matua and Hori Ropata, remained at Waimarama taking care of their sick, many of whom died there. Te Ropiha stayed there because his wife Te Poti was ill (MLC Minute Book 14: 12).

Henare Matua said in his evidence that he and his people returned "some time before Mr Colenso arrived, as we had lived at Heretaunga and at Porangahau before his arrival. We were living at Porangahau and had established a church before Mr Colenso came and established a school there." He said that Tamati Te Putaranui and Te Matenga Tukarero from Nuhaka and Mahia were the native ministers who introduced Christianity to Nukutaurua about a year or two before the people of Hawke's Bay left there.

Henare Matua said that the Wairarapa people returned from Nukutaurua in two lots, one in 1840 with his people, and the second in 1841, also with some of his people. All the people went to Porangahau from Waimarama leaving Te Ropiha, Hoani Matua and some children at Waimarama. Henare did not know why they stayed at Waimarama, but he did say "We did have sick people with us out of whom six died at that place. Four of those six were brought from Nukutaurua as invalids." (MLC MB 14: 21). He said that they buried all their dead at Waimarama themselves (MLC MB 14: 34). He named the people who were buried at Waimarama as: Te Ropiha's wife, (she was one of the sick), Te Nohoporua's father, Te Waaho of Ngati Kere and Taharo, a brother of Ropiha. (MLC MB 14: 68-69). Also Paora's mother and Pareta's father died and were buried at Waimarama. Te Rangitakaiwaho, the father of Raniera, was buried at Waimarama but subsequently exhumed and taken to the Wairarapa. (MLC MB 14: 70-71).

The people recorded by Henare Matua as being buried at Waimarama do not accord exactly with the archaeological evidence. The presence of the three children (two infants, and fragments of a child aged about 11-12) can be explained by the fact that they were probably not of sufficient importance to be



remembered by Henare Matua when giving his evidence well over forty years after the event. Henare Matua named four men and two women. Matisoo-Smith identified four males and one female. The sex of the skeleton from Grave 10 was not obtained, but it was a tall, robust individual, probably male. Fragments of at least one other adult (gender undefined) were also recovered. It is possible that one or two other people were buried at this time but that Henare Matua does not remember them.

It is not possible to definitely conclude that this urupa is the final resting place of people who had halted at Waimarama on their way home to Porangahau from their years of exile at Nukutaurua. However if these are the remains of the people Henare and Wi Matua spoke of then that may explain why the people of Waimarama had no knowledge of an urupa placed in such a public and busy place as beside the only boat launching place at Waimarama.

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