

TĀKITUMU - e ai ki a Tama Huata Ngāti Kahungunu

This is another story of the Tākitumu waka is according to the traditions and research from Rarotonga and is transcribed from an interview with Tama Huata, executive director of the Tākitumu Festival.

Please note spelling: In Rarotonga the waka is known as Tākitumu. In New Zealand it is known as Tākitumu.

The origin of the waka came out of Upolu in Samoa around 1060. It came about from the actions of two brothers, Orokeu and Oronaino, who were brothers of the Ariki in Upolu at that time who was Vatonga, also known as Atonga, Maori call him Whatonga.

It was the desire of Orokeu and Oronaino to leave Samoa so they decided to build a waka. They went into the forest of Rata, which still has same name today, they found a tree and cut the tree down. There they began to fashion the waka and that became the origin of the waka over a long period of time.

In a skirmish while they were fashioning the canoe, they got killed. Their brother Whatonga when he went back into the forest where his brothers were working and where they were killed, he saw the waka and embraced it.

He ordered the waka to be brought back to the shore. A boat shed was built there, or a waka house, so the waka could be completed.

Whatonga gave the waka its first name: Tarai Po. It means fashioned in the night. That was the name for the incident which took place and so it was commemorated through that time.

When Whatonga ordered it to be moved down to the beach, he enlisted the help of a hapu, small people, Maru aitu, he asked them to bring this unfinished waka to the shore. They moved it through the night and when the people awoke it was sitting there. When they asked how did it come there, Whatonga replied, te manu karere, the birds flew it in.

So that became its second name: Te Manu Karere.

When it was launched, the son of Whatonga, his name was Arutanga, he wanted to take the captainship of the waka but he was sure his father wouldn't consent. So he asked his wife to go and see his father. The story goes she visited Whatonga and stayed all night and by the next day permission had been given to her husband to take possession.

So when they launched the waka it took its third name: Te Pori o Kare.

The wife, her name was Kare and Te Pore o Kari means the beauty of Kare. They launched the waka into the Pacific under that name. It was the largest waka of its kind in the Pacific, it was a waka hourua, a double hull vessel.

It was loaded with whariki, mats, supplied for trade. The waka visited the next island, Tonga and there were exchanges, trading, with all the ariki lines in the Pacific, which maintained the heirachy structure.

Then the waka landed in Fiji, where they took the waka out of the water.

It was here it took its fourth name: Te Orau Roa Ki Iti, the long house in Fiji.

The waka stayed there for 10 or 11 years. During that time a fight started between people from Samoa and Fijian people. The Samoan people used short clubs and Fijians had long spears. The result was the clubs won out because it was all hand to hand combat.

Arutanga and the crew of the waka decided to settle in Fiji and there were cases of intermarriage between the two previously warring groups.

The family of Arutanga was still in Samoa, so his son Kaukura decided to sail to Fiji to bring the waka back to Samoa. When they got into Samoa, the waka had been out of the water for a long time, so a decision was made to cure the wood and the vessel was sunk in a lagoon.

And it took its fifth name: Te Tuna Moe Vai. The eel that slept.

And then after it was cured, it was repaired so it could resume trading between the Pacific Islands.

From there it took its sixth name: Numiao. The seeker. It was given this name because of its movements throughout the islands, maintaining the linkages with people.

The waka came into the hands of Tangiia. He was given the captainship of the waka over some say his brother or cousin, Tutapu. They were at least very close cousins.

Tutapu thought he deserved to be in charge of the waka but it was given to Tangiia, a decision which made way for one of the biggest sea pursuits in the Pacific.

Tutapu wanted to take the waka off Tangiia, and chased him all over the Pacific. The sister of Tangiia gave him information on how to avoid Tutapu.

And through this story the waka takes on its seventh name: Te Tika a Te Tuaine. The right of the sister.

She gave Tangiia the stories or information of where Tutapu was likely to come from next.

Finally Tangiia lands at Borabora. The waka had been in and out of these islands many times. In Tahiti they looked out into the ocean and saw what is described as an armada of waka under the command of Tutapu, who had caught up with Tangiia.

The alarm was raised, Tangiia got into the waka and because of its size and speed, it managed to out run Tutapu.

The waka takes on its eighth name: Te Takipu. It means to leave in haste.

They made their way to Rarotonga. On the way Tangiia come across his cousin Karika. They have a sailing jostle at sea. The result was Tangiia won. They formed an alliance and Tangiia explained to Karika that Tutapu was chasing him.

Both of the waka made their way to Rarotonga where they decided to make a stand against Tutapu. They prepared for battle and waited for Tutapu.

And the outcome of it all was that Tutapu and his party, his warriors, were defeated. Tutapu was killed by Tangiia. In line with their rituals at that time, Tangiia plucked Tutapu's eye out and held it up into the air.

Tangiia then exclaimed, Taki tumu, and that became the final name of the waka.

Taki means to lift. And in Rarotonga, tumu is the enduring part inside of the coconut palm tree which can withstand storms, hurricanes. It is known as the burden.

By announcing taki tumu, Tangiia was saying, the burden has been lifted.

Tangiia had decided to settle in Rarotonga after defeating Tutapu.

After 300 years the Tākitumu waka was on its last legs but when it came to the great migration in 1350, all of the people of the other waka asked for Tākitumu to lead the fleet.

All of the other waka came from the outer islands, Tahiti, Mauke and Aitutaki and others.

Tangiia had settled into being the head of his clan. His main priority now was as chief of his people, determining how they survived and providing for them.

And at this time Tamatea Arikinui came on the scene and picks up the tohunga, Ruawharo. They prepare the waka for what is to be its final voyage.

They led the fleet out of Rarotonga and then when it got close to Aotearoa, to the north, Tamatea gave the command, to let all of the waka go.

First landing place of the waka was Kaitaia, Awanui. The second place was Tauranga and this is where Tamatea Arikinui left the waka.

Then the waka travelled around the East Coast and set up its first Tākitumu wananga at Waikawa, Portland Island, where all of the traditions of the people were taught.

With the departure of Tamatea Arikinui at Tauranga, Tahu takes over as captain on the waka.

He sailed it down the coast, through Te Matau A Maui and Wairarapa, stopping at various points where people left the waka to settle.

Tahu took the waka on to the South Island to pursue the greenstone which voyager Kupe had talked about in previous stories.

The waka arrived at Te Anau, via the Wairau River where it meets a number of different rivers. It was here the waka found itself in a whirlpool.

They say, ko nga wai e patoto mai te ata ki te po, that the waters pulsate from morning to night. And when it got into the whirl pool, the waka broke up.

There is a cave in Te Anau which was the final resting place of the waka Tākitumu and it is commemorated by naming the mountains above, the Tākitumu Ranges, which look down on that spot.

The audio version of this story can be accessed on the internet:

http://web.me.com/lawrence_gullery/Site/Audio/Audio.html

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