Ngati Whatua o Orakei Heritage Report for

State Highway 20; Transit Manukau Harbour Crossing

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Tamaki – A Brief Historical Background

The Auckland Isthmus has seen a millennium of Maori occupation and use. Tamaki Makaurau or ‘Tamaki-the bride sought by a hundred suitors’ is the ancestral name for the Auckland Isthmus. The ancient but oft quoted whakatauki (proverb) Tamaki Herenga Waka describes Auckland as the resting place of many waka, a reference to layers of tribal associations with the Auckland area. Many tribes descended from ancestral waka including Te Arawa, Mataatua, Aotea, Tainui and Mahuhu have flourished at Tamaki as the volcanic soils provided nutrient rich material for gardening across the Isthmus.

The short distance between the east and the west coast was also attractive as resources could be obtained easily from both coasts. The Isthmus itself provides no less than 8 waka portages with the most significant at Te To Waka, the Otahuhu portage (Portage Road).

Maori had their food production organised into gardening and fishing circuits themselves dictated by soils, fish stocks and the native calendar (maramataka). The circuits involved establishing satellite fishing and gardening camps away from the main centres for fishing and hunting during the summer months. Food would then be preserved and taken back to base camp stores for the winter months.

By 1740 the Waiohua confederation of tribes under their paramount leader, Kiwi Tamaki held the mana on the central Isthmus. Kiwi had his residence at Maungakiekie (One Tree Hill), an elaborately built and impregnable fortified pa. The Te Taou tribe had been steadily moving from the far north and were well established in the south Kaipara region after displacing the Kawerau people.

However Te Taou coveted Tamaki-Makaurau and had cause to obtain it after Kiwi had killed a number of prominent women while attending a unuhanga ceremony in the Kaipara. Under the leadership of Tuperiri and Wahaakiaki, Te Taou undertook an intensive campaign against the Waiohua culminating in the death of Kiwi Tamaki - who was killed in battle near Little Muddy Creek in West Auckland. After further battles on the Isthmus, Tuperiri took up residence at Maungakiekie and the possession of all the lands formerly held by the Waiohua. There were a number of peace marriages between Te Taou and Waiohua and two new sub-tribes formed under the name Nga Oho and Te Uringutu. Today the three hapu, Te Taou, Ngaoho and Te Uringutu, are otherwise known as ‘Ngati Whatua o Orakei’.

The 1820’s period saw the Auckland Isthmus temporarily deserted as the tribes of Tamaki sought refuge in the Waikato, Mahurangi and Waitakere regions from the musket bearing tribes from the north looking for utu (revenge) for past defeats. Tamaki became generally unsafe to reside in during this period as war-parties from the north frequently passed through using the short Otahuhu portage to access the west coast from the east and vice versa. However, under Te Kawau and with the assistance of Te Wherowhero and their Waikato relatives they returned to the central Isthmus permanently in 1835 as the power of the musket was balanced, which in turn brought peace. Crops were re-established and the home fires burned again at the numerous settlements across Tamaki.

In 1840 Governor Hobson arrived after an invitation to settle in Auckland from Apihai Te Kawau. Much land was gifted to establish a settler population with the remainder of the lands
alienated through dubious ‘sales’. By 1951, Ngati Whatua o Orakei were virtually landless with only ¼ of an acre left at Okahu Bay. Parts of the estate were returned in 1991 as part of the Orakei Claim however the remaining 80,000 acres is currently the subject of negotiations between Orakei and the Crown.

Ancestral connections with Onehunga

The hapu incorporating Ngati Whatua o Orakei have their own direct associations with the Onehunga area stretching back to the time of the Te Taou conquest. The genealogical links to the earlier occupation groups that were created through the marriages of the Te Taou victors with the defeated Waiohua however, see Ngati Whatua able to identify these prior peoples as part of their heritage too. Thus Ngati Whatua o Orakei shares in the entire length of the Maori occupation of the Onehunga area.

Onehunga and its surrounding land and waterways cannot be seen in isolation but as one ‘township’/resource hub in a Tamaki cityscape of often connected kainga and use sites. The Manukau Harbour, in which Onehunga is located, has been long settled by Maori. The ancestral waka Tainui made the crossing via the portage from the Waitemata, entering the Manukau near Otahuhu and ever since then it has been a pathway for people crossing the isthmus or coming to Tamaki via portages from the Waikato. The rich marine resources of the Manukau, particularly fish (such as kanae/mullet and pioke/dog-shark) and shellfish (eg. pipi, tuatua, tuangi/cockle and tio/oyster) have sustained generations of tangata whenua – as suggested by the preponderance of midden shown in the map of Onehunga below (from the New Zealand Archaeological Association):

The name Onehunga itself has been identified as having several different possible meanings. Simmons renders it as “friable earth” (and certainly it was recognised for its fertile volcanic soil over the centuries) but then quotes Potene as stating that it should be “O Nehunga” or the “Place of Burials” because of the lava caves in the vicinity used for interment. He finishes however by saying that “This statement has since been contradicted. Onehunga, landing or
disembarking beach.” [1]. Sir George Grey and the Reverend Purchas are quoted as having established that the name Onehunga was conferred on the district by the Waiohua [2, p5]. Borchard claims that the Akarana Maori Association discussed the point “and agreed that the older name [One-unga – or a place where canoes hauled up] has a better claim” [3, p3].

In places the above mentioned lava caves have had their roofs fall in leaving depressions “such as those...called the “grotto” and “pond”, which have been mistaken for points of eruption or crater-sinkings” [4, p235].

Other landmarks around Onehunga carry their own distinct names. Te Hopua is the crater once inundated by the sea but used as a Council rubbish tip and in-filled in the 1930s, now known as Gloucester Park [5, p60]. This volcano, along with the others of Tamaki, is said to result from the efforts of powerful tohunga from Waitakere to destroy a war party from Hunua (provoked by the illicit love affair between a girl of their people, Hinemairangi, and Tamaireia of Waitakere), releasing the volcanic forces of the earth (controlled by the unborn god child Ruiaumoko, restless within the womb of his earth mother Papatuanuku). An alternative explanation is their creation via the efforts of Mahuika, goddess of fire, called upon by Mataaho the giant to warm him. These traditions reflect tribal cosmological beliefs and explain the environment Ngati Whatua o Orakei ancestors and their descendants have encountered. They link ancestral names and events to landscapes and provide an unbroken association with the formation of Tamaki Makaurau and its many generations of ongoing human occupation. They also reflect the spiritual nature of the volcanoes – associated with the actions of the gods themselves and the very body of our earth parent.

![Te Hopua before being in-filled and divided by the highway](image)

Puhea Creek runs down a gully into Hillsborough Bay where the motorway crosses the shoreline in its run up to Queenstown Rd but its waters are now piped into the harbour. The full name for the creek and that area of the foreshore is Te Puheatanga o Te Ata (The blowing in of Te Ata). Te Ata is the ancestress of Ngati Te Ata and here her waka was blown ashore in high winds during her visits to relations in this area.
Onehunga was blessed with fresh water sources and the multiple springs that well up from the volcanic rock are still used by industries there today. The spring on the corner of Princes St and Spring St “had been a favourite watering place of the Maori and became the town’s main source of water” [5, p41].

Waihihi is the name of a land block of 163 acres at Onehunga “encompassing all the most valuable land in the town” ‘purchased’ from Wiremu Hopihona by Thomas Jackson [2, p9]. Von Hochstetter gives the origin of this name as coming from the water ‘boiling out’ from “springs on the north-east edge of Gedde’s Basin [Te Hopua]” [6, p196].

Te Papapa, or “The fortress built with rock slabs” [1] refers to the district between Penrose and Onehunga.

Waikaraka or “Waters of the karaka tree” became the location of a “cemetery on the shores of the Manukau Harbour to the east of Onehunga.” [1]. The bay there has since been reclaimed and is now known as Waikaraka Park.

In the Waiohua era prior to the Te Taou conquest, Maungakiekie was the keystone settlement in Tamaki. Tahuri, the mother of Kiwi Tamaki, was the famed gardener of that maunga’s associated kumara plantations. Her cultivations became known as Nga Maara a Tahuri and are said to have extended all the way from Maungakiekie to Onehunga. A saying of that time stated that if you wanted to find the awheto (a caterpillar that feeds on the kumara plant), you should visit Tahuri’s gardens (because of the bounty of the sweet potato therein).

Foster recalls mention in a map (see below) produced by Fenton of a pa (labelled “Uringutu” – notable as one of the three composite hapu of Ngati Whatua o Orakei) located inland from the Onehunga shore and identifies (with this author) a likely site for it as being the high ground of present day Jellicoe Park. He also remembers being told of midden being noted previously in this location [7]. Jellicoe Park’s 1988 Management Plan notes its previous name of “‘Green Hill’ (formerly a Maori kumara plantation)” [8, part 1.7].
Ngati Whatua o Orakei and Onehunga

Following the Te Taou conquest of Waiohua, Tuperiri replaced Kiwi Tamaki as the chief of Maungakiekie and the three hapu that came to be known as Ngati Whatua o Orakei – Te Taou, Nga Oho and Te Uringutu – commenced a new era in the human settlement of Tamaki and the use of its natural resources.

After the death of Tuperiri about 1795, Ngati Whatua in Tamaki changed their pattern of settlement, coming down from the heights of Maungakiekie and establishing themselves in coastal kainga such as at Onehunga, with seasonal movement related to resource use.

“Between 1820 and 1840, the two principal places of residence of Te Taou were Mangere and Onehunga...which together formed the two halves of a site complex...Each section of the Mangere-Onehunga complex was separately backed by hundreds of acres of light, productive soils...enabling depleted garden plots to be continuously re-located adjacent to the main settlement ” [9, p23].

A short waka crossing connected the two halves of the “complex” but at that time movement between them by foot was also possible. “Maori camped at the water’s edge until low tide and made the journey more or less on foot. In those days, a long bar of basalt rock stretched across the mudflats from near where the present undulating bridge meets Mangere. They walked across the bar to where the low-tide stream trickled, a few yards wide and seldom deeper than chest level. Early traders exploited this peaceful toing and froing when they used dynamite to widen the channel for heavier shipping in 1858” [3, p74].

Sullivan goes on to describe the typical seasonal occupation and resource use cycle of Te Taou over the twenty year period on which she focuses. In autumn and winter she locates the hapu in the Mangere-Onehunga complex. She states that in the winter [soon after Matariki], “garden work for a new cultivation season was begun in the gardens of the main settlement sites; largely the re-tilling, and later re-planting of one- and two-year old garden plots” [Ibid, p23]. She notes that during this season the people probably lived predominantly on stored food but may have carried out some fishing and shellfish gathering.

In the early spring Sullivan describes the movement of small work parties out from the main Onehunga-Mangere kainga to plant “fishing gardens” along the shores of the Waitemata and Manukau, designed to provide food for larger groups in the summer fishing season ahead. “At this stage, movement and distribution of people in groups between the main settlement at Mangere-Onehunga and subsidiary sites in Mangere and Tamaki seems to have been quite variable: if a new, large clearing was planned, all members of Te Taou might move out to the subsidiary site to help clear and to build houses...otherwise, when the garden work at the main settlements was done, kin groups...moved out on an individual basis to subsidiary sites” [Ibid, p25].

“By the beginning of summer all new season’s clearings had been planted and the Taou turned their full-time attention to fishing. A major dispersal of the population from the main sites occurred along a summer fishing, shark fishing, and sea food gathering circuit, which
available indications suggest to have moved methodically through each of the Taou’s harbour fishing grounds in turn, digging and eating the previously planted and now matured crops of the fishing gardens at a sequence of stations, while the work of getting fish went on” [Ibid, p26].

Sullivan notes that “During the summer fishing dispersals only a small caretaker population remained at the main settlements at Mangere and Onehunga to tend pigs...and no doubt to weed main crop gardens” [Ibid, p27].

She states that “the end of the full-time summer fishing season came when the Taou moved down harbour from the upper Waitemata around February...and Te Taou went back to their main and subsidiary settlements at Mangere, Onehunga and the vicinity of Orakei to do a little more part-time fishing, to finish drying the fish catches and probably to engage in a number of minor food-getting activities, including the gathering of karaka berries for winter use...before beginning work on lifting and storing the year’s main kumara and potato crops [at which time] the year’s gardening work was completed” [Ibid, p29].

Besides these gardening and fishing activities, Sullivan mentions other food sources such as eels, kuaka (curlew) and forest birds. Of relevance to this last, she previously notes that “woodland occurred near...Onehunga” [Ibid, p13]. She also describes autumn pig drives being held and the arrival in this season of visiting parties “to be feasted on the accumulated surplus of the year’s work” [Ibid, p29] – just as Te Taou would pay social visits to their kin groups.

It must be noted that although Sullivan focuses on Te Taou in her thesis, the group she is describing contained members from all three of the composite hapu of Ngati Whatua o Orakei in Tamaki today – eg. the chief Paora Tuhaere (who assumed the mantle of leadership after Apihai Te Kawau) publicly (in the Orakei Native Land Court) stated that “Te Tao Ngaoho and Uringutu are all one people” [10, p123].

From her analysis of the literature Sullivan breaks down the movements of Maori groups in greater Auckland over the years 1819 to 1840. She states that in November 1819 Ngapuhi under Patuone “reach Tamaki overload from Kaipara: attack “Waikato” at Waitemata and raid gardens at Onehunga, in retaliation for recent Ngapuhi deaths at Motutapu” [9, Appendix 2C].

The missionary Samuel Marsden recalls in his journal from November 9, 1820: “At Manukau three brother chiefs reside named Kowhow (Kawau), Koroeaerau, and Tettawangh. They carry on an extensive cultivation of potatoes...I asked him [Apihai Te Kawau] to let us have a large empty building, about eighty feet long by sixteen, which was near the beach, for the accommodation of ourselves and people who had attended us from Mogoea” [11, p314].

Footnotes identify Marsden travelling from Panmure (Mokoia) to Onehunga on the Manukau. Te Kawau provided him with a waka with which to explore the harbour. Te Kawau himself defines his residence at Onehunga about this time as “cultivations but no pa” [10, p73]. Apihai describes being born at Ihumatao and going backwards and forwards between there, Onehunga and Orakei whilst growing up.
In 1821 (March is suggested by Sullivan), a party of Tamaki Ngati Whatua (notably the ariki Apihai Te Kawau) drawn from several places, including Onehunga, went to the Ngati Paoa pa at Maunainina (Panmure) at the request of the home people and assisted them in driving off a Ngapuhi attack.

Soon after this the warriors of Ngati Whatua o Orakei, including Te Kawau, left on their own protracted raid to the south. Sullivan notes that the “Women of Te Taou remained at Mangere and Onehunga to begin cultivation of gardens in [the] new season” [9, App. 2C].

In November of that year those who had stayed in the home kainga were forced to flee to Waitakere to avoid a major Ngapuhi expedition against Tamaki. In their absence the crops were destroyed [Ibid]. This signalled more than a decade of displacement for the people of Te Taou, Uringutu and Nga Oho, as they frequently moved through the adjacent territories of related tribes to avoid contact with Ngapuhi raiders. During this period however, there were interludes of peace at which times Ngati Whatua would return to Tamaki and take up their usual activities at Onehunga and other sites (eg. from the winter of 1822 through the cultivation year of 1823-4 [Ibid]). Sullivan has Ngati Whatua again abandoning their cultivations in Tamaki in 1825 in the face of a new advance by Ngapuhi under Hongi Hika, only to return early in about March of the following year when Hongi goes back to the Bay of Islands. In June, Tamaki is depopulated again under the threat of renewed Ngapuhi attack [Ibid]. Apart from apparently transient visits to Tamaki in the succeeding years, it would seem that Ngati Whataua hapu did not begin to make a significant return until about November of 1834 (fishing on the Manukau that summer) and clearing gardens again at Onehunga a year later [Ibid].

It is known that different tribal groups in Tamaki might reside in the same general locale for periods of time during the yearly cycle of resource use, under the mana of the tangata whenua. Paora Te Iwi claims that Ngati Te Ata (a Tainui group closely related to the Ngati Whataua o Orakei hapu) also had a presence at Onehunga (indeed on both sides of the Manukau) at the time of Hongi’s invasion and after that tribe and Ngati Whatua o Orakei returned following the end of hostilities [10, p11].

Around October of 1837 Ngati Mahuta (also Tainui) under the ariki Potatau Te Wherowhero established themselves at Mangere-Onehunga on land offered to them to share by Ngati Whataua o Orakei. In 1844 Robert Forbes ‘purchased’ approximately 9 acres that “was the site of a whare where Te WheroWhero had resided previously for 2 or 3 months of every year...Forbes built the New Leith Inn on the land, a short distance from the beach and near the foot of the main road to Auckland, later known as Norman’s Hill Rd” [5, p122].

Paora Tuhaere confirmed that ‘Ngati Mahutu’ were also living at Onehunga before the time of the first Governor coming to Tamaki (ie. 1840), whilst Uringutu were cultivating there and Ngati Whataua o Orakei’s main settlement was at Mangere [10, p114-115].

Apihai Te Kawau states that “I left my other places vis Mangere and Onehunga when I came here [Orakei] to reside permanently when I was found by the Europeans” [10, p76]. However William Hobson, the first Governor, slept at Onehunga (‘Oneunga’) in 1840 “in the Maori
meeting house, on the nights of October 26th and 27th [2, p5] and Sir John Logan Campbell and William Brown had visited Kawau in the Manukau around this same time and bought pigs from him. Campbell’s account of this gives a first-hand description of the Ngati Whatua kainga at Onehunga: “Underneath us [from the base of Maungakiekie], away at the foot of the slope which stretched from where we stood to the shore, close to the beach we could see the blue smoke rising from the native settlement. We walked slowly down the winding, sloping footpath...As we neared the settlement we walked through a large kumara plantation, and upon coming near the huts...Our repast finished with a draught of the most exquisitely clear spring water which gushed out on the beach in a wonderful stream...” [12, p60-61].

In the years after the signing of the Treaty of Waitangi, Onehunga was a busy trading port which received large amounts of Maori goods from the Manukau and Waikato to supply the developing city of Auckland. Ngati Whatua o Orakei were major players in this economy. Mogford writes that “Until about 1847 the main trading centre was the beach which lay between the bottom of Norman’s Hill Rd and the foot of Princes St [the approximate location of Apihai’s kainga, as suggested by the site marked “Settlement” on the NZAA map – author’s note]. It was there that all the trading with Maori took place. From their canoes they unloaded their produce onto the shell bank which fronted the beach” [5, p117]. Scott states that “Throughout the [eighteen] fifties the Manukau was the harbour that kept Auckland alive” [13, p10-11]. He details that in 1856, 544 waka were unloaded at Onehunga and “In one typical year canoes crossed the Manukau with cargo that included 2408 bags of wheat, 236 pigs, 25 tons of fish, 104 tons of kauri gum and 432 tons of firewood...also hundreds of kits of potatoes, onions, kumara, maize, cabbage, peaches and gooseberries. They carried ducks, fowls and goats and flax, hay and straw” [Ibid].

The quality of another mode of transport around Onehunga at this time (and an impression of the local environment) is given by the description of the road from Onehunga to Auckland as “a mere path straggling through blocks of scoria” [14].

Ngati Whatua o Orakei tupuna known to have historical connections to Onehunga, and not already mentioned, included Awarua/Aworua/Awoarua (the older brother of Apihai) [eg. 10, p67], Tahuri/Tuhuri/Tuhuiri (Awarua’s mother) [eg. 10, p88] and her husband Tamani [10, p79], who resided there; Te Warena Hengia/Henga and Hakopu Te Pairainu [eg. 10, p86]; Te Moana, Reweti/Rewiti, Kawae, Tinana Te Tamaki, Matiu, Tama Waka, Te Keene and Te Hira (who are mentioned on the deeds of Onehunga land ‘sales’) [see 15, p116; 2, p5-9].

McKegg notes 1298 acres of Onehunga land was ‘bought’ from Ngati Whatua o Orakei out of a total of 1306 acres sold [16, p57]. Much of this was purchased during the period of the so-called ‘Fitzroy waivers’ (1844-5) when settlers could purchase land directly from Maori vendors, itself a breach of the Treaty of Waitangi. When these transactions were later examined by land commissioners appointed by the next Governor (Grey), the sale of only 8 acres was upheld. Of the remainder, McKegg states that 723 acres became Crown land and a further 575 was also kept by the Crown as defence land - none was made available to its original owners (even despite the supposed requirement under the waiver system that a proportion of the land sold was to be kept aside for the benefit of its Maori owners – who
like-wise never benefited from the percentage of the price paid that was meant to go into a fund for their advancement). The land acquired by the Crown formed the basis for the development of Onehunga from 1847 as a ‘fencible’ settlement, populated by former soldiers who were expected to be available for operations against Maori as anticipated by the dubious perception of the threat of attack on Auckland (from external Maori groups). Ironically initial difficulties in housing these men were “overcome when the Maori building labourers offered to erect raupo whares” [2, p19]. This dichotomy – whereby Maori such as Ngati Whataua o Orakei were looking to establish a partnership with the Crown, whilst the Crown were trying to cement their dominance of tangata whenua, remained a feature of the relationship after that time.

The pensioner soldiers of Onehunga “were called out on only one occasion...In April 1851...to the city where they formed up with other troops in the hills above Mechanics Bay” [17] to confront a Ngati Paoa party angered by the treatment of one of their chiefs accused of theft. Ngati Paoa eventually retreated to Okahu Bay with Ngati Whataua o Orakei after a negotiated peace.

In 1860 the continuing belief in a (particularly Waikato) threat to Auckland, led to the construction of the blockhouse that still stands in Jellicoe Park.

The position of tangata whenua deteriorated further in 1863 when the Government invaded the Waikato. Governor George Grey required all Maori around the Manukau and in South Auckland to sign an oath of allegiance to the Crown (and wear a badge identifying themselves as ‘friendly’). “Quite understandably, because of their strong ties with the Waikato tribes, they refused and were left with no alternative but to abandon their farms, crops and cattle and flee south. Almost overnight, 20 years and more of missionary endeavour and prosperous farming enterprise by the Maori farmers under the guidance of the missions [eg. at Ihumatao] was, for all practical purposes, ended. Their land was confiscated” [5, p23]. Ironically (again), Pakeha evacuated from outlying settlements because of the Government initiated war, were housed in Onehunga in “ Unsightly buildings, lately known as the Maori Market House opposite the Royal Hotel” [Ibid].

It was at this time that the Onehunga and Auckland Naval Volunteers combined to comb the waterways of the Manukau for Maori vessels. They “brought back a fleet of canoes and towed them into Gedde’s Basin. Among their trophies was Te Toki-a-Tapiri. Now displayed in the Auckland Museum as it was (by virtue of its exceptional quality) exempted from the general order for destruction of captured canoes” [Ibid]. Te Toki-a-Tapiri was the property of Ahipene Kaihau and is described as totara, eighty feet long and capable of carrying a hundred warriors [18, p78]. Tonson states that after its seizure it remained “for a long time on the beach at Onehunga”.

The above account clearly illustrates the settler-led process through which the Maori of Onehunga, including Ngati Whataua o Orakei, were reduced and displaced from their position as mana whenua / tangata whenua, and New Zealand citizens as affirmed through the Treaty, to being viewed as outsiders, a potential threat to the Pakeha dominated town who must be
suppressed and ultimately punished. The destruction of the Maori way of life was furthered by more than a century of spoiling of the harbour by industrial, sewerage, farm and domestic waste, as well as land reclamation, that damaged the shellfish beds and left the waters and marine resources of the Manukau polluted. From then until now the people comprising Ngati Whatua o Orakei have striven to have the promises made to them by the Crown honoured, to have their relationships with their ancestral lands supported and to be empowered to fulfil their role as tangata whenua in their city.

References


