



A Story of
Tutaeporoporo

Taniwha

Probably the most famous taniwha that we have within our iwi history is the misunderstood Tutaeporoporo. There are many versions of the story about this taniwha, ranging from the mysterious to the sublime and from iwi to iwi, depending on from whence the storyteller comes.

Within the Ngā Rauru iwi, the major teller of this story who has been recorded is Wiremu Kauika, whilst Maui Pomare has also been recorded by James Cowan.

Others have also attempted to record the story, and so the following is the kōrero of Tutaeporoporo by a descendant of Tū Ariki, the man who was the kaitiaki of Tutaeporoporo. It can be added to the rest of the series and the reader can then make up their own mind as to the veracity of the story.

He whakapapa nā Apahapaitaketake ki Tuariki atu ki te Kai-tuhituhi.

Apahapaitaketake

Tupua-horonuku

Tawhito

Tupua-unurere

Tuariki

Rakeikauwhata

Tupa-a-Kura

Tonganui

Pikinau

Hinerahui

Rangiopewai

Tairapanga

Ranginui

Hawea

Te Iriwhare

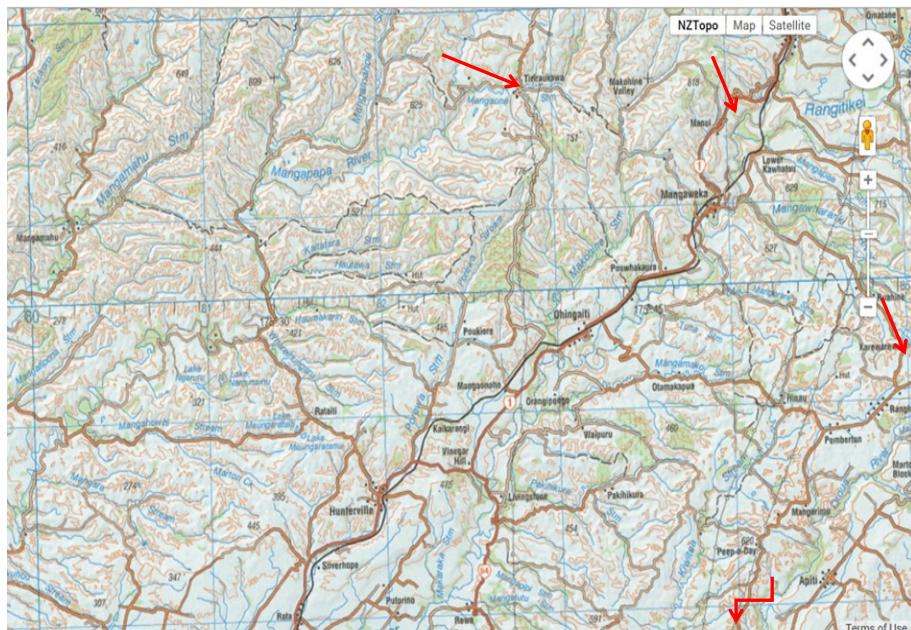
Te Reta

Taiene

Te Rira

Tū Ariki and Tutaeporoporo

Tū Ariki was a rangatira who had influence across a major part of the Rangitikei. His area included from Tiri Raukawa, a maunga in the north, east to Te Kiekie at the confluence of the Makohine Stream and Rangitikei River, then south a short distance to the mouth of the Mangamako stream. From here the line went east again to the source of the Mangamako and on to the Kiwitea stream. Here the line went south along the Kiwitea stream to the confluence of the Kiwitea stream and the Oroua River then to Parewānui.



An outline of the northern boundary of Tu Ariki—from Tiri Raukawa to the Oroua River

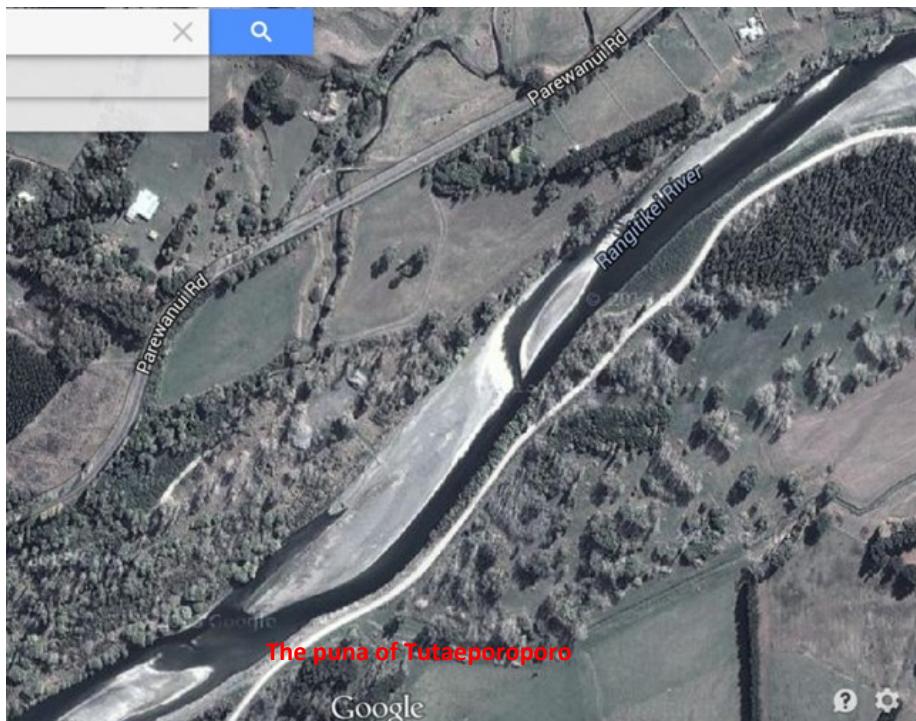
He went off to visit whānau in the Whakatū area at the top of the South Island. and while there he, with others, went out to sea in their canoes to catch fish. Many fish were taken during the expedition and at a place named Te Tāero-a-Kereopa (now called Boulder Bank—pictured below) he captured a shark and realising that it was a special creature, he decided that instead of killing it, he would take it back with him to his home just out of Tawhirihoe, to Parewānui.



He placed his mokai in a waterhole among the local creeks, and fed it every day. After a time Tu-ariki returned to his home at Rangi-tikei, taking with him his pet, which he named ***Tutae-poroporo***. He placed it in a deep hole in the Rangitikei River, just below where the Tutaenui Stream empties itself into the river, and here he attended to it daily, feeding it and reciting karakia over it until it became as big as a whale, and developed into a real live taniwha.

After Tutaeporoporo was fully grown, there came a war party from Whanga-nui into the district, and Tu-ariki was killed and his body carried back to Whanga-nui, to be eaten. This event is commemorated in the name “Ohakēā” or ‘the place where a war party came under false pretences’.





This is the place where Tutaeporoporo was raised. The river pictured is the Rangitikei river and the small stream that flow from the top of the picture is Tutaeporoporonui Stream, now known by the abbreviated name “Tutaenui Stream.

It is situated approximately 3 kms to the west of Te Arataumaihi (Bulls) township along Parewānui Road.

Tutaeporoporo, not knowing what had happened to his great and gentle master, waited a long time for him to return, but sadly he waited in vain; Tu-ariki was no longer coming to see him, to feed him and share time with him. So he proceeded to investigate. He climbed out of his puna and travelled all over the paths Tu-ariki used to frequent, trying to scent him, but again in vain; he discovered nothing, then Tutaeporoporo lamented his master with great lamentation, feeling are that he had been killed or taken away by a strange war party.

After the tangi was over he again left his hole, this time in search of the people who had killed his master. He went down the Rangitikei River till he reached the ocean, and there he sniffed the four winds of Heaven, still endeavouring to get a trace of Tu-ariki. He sniffed the winds of the South with no result; neither did the North wind ring any familiar scent; but when he tried the winds from the West he thought he detected the smell of his master, so he started off and came to the mouth of the Whanga-nui River. It was at the mouth of the Whanganui that he smelt the smell of the ovens and knew that his master had been killed.

He stayed for a while at Te Kaihau o Kupe (Okupe), thinking that he would get revenge for the death of his kaitiaki, but after a while it seemed to him that it was taking too long to gain satisfaction so he moved up river to Paparoa and settled for a while in the puna Mata-tiwhaia-ki-te-pounamu, near Pipiriki.



For many weeks and months, Tutaeporoporo drew his revenge from amongst the travellers of the river, swallowing waka and their crews —men, women and children as well as everything that was upon them. The friends of the people eaten by him thought they had long arrived at their destination, but sadly they had been killed and eaten by Tutaeporoporo as utu for the killing of his master...

After a period of time some of the friends of the victims decided to go to look for them, as they hadn't returned, and there had been no news of them. So they joined together, loaded their canoes, and started off down the river. They had arranged amongst themselves that some canoes would go ahead, with the idea that, if they got into trouble from other iwi or the river, the rest could either draw back or go to their assistance. Soon some of the canoes came near to the place where Tutaeporoporo was living. He had smelt them on the water and in the air, and when he finally saw them, he charged at them, raising great waves like the sea. The people in the canoes could not escape; they were caught and eaten, while those behind paddled to the *Wairere* shore, abandoned their canoes, and ran back to their homes overland. From that point on, it became known to everyone that Tutaeporoporo was now present on the river.

Again it seemed to take a long time for him to get revenge for the killing of his kaitiaki, so feeling that he would have better success he travelled back down the river to Purua, where he at last found a suitable place for a permanent home at Pu-rua, just under Tau-maha-aute (Shakespeare Cliff).

He lived among three caves there, one named Waipuna, which was situated just below Putiki, near Okupe, the second was just by the “Dublin Bridge” and was named Wairere (near Kowhai Park); and the third cave was named Kaimatira, and was sited just above Aramoho, near Okoia. It was from these three caves that Tutaeporoporo would sweep out and attack travellers as they rowed past.



The iwi of the river gathered together to discuss how they were going to get rid of Tutaeporoporo. Nobody thought about why he was there, rather that he needed to be gone! Many hui were held amongst the people, and there was a lot of talking. At one hui a rangatira from *Putiki-wharanui-a-Tamatea-pokai-whenua* (Putiki Pā) named Tama-ahua stood up and said: "I have heard of a man at Wai-totara, who is supposed to be a great toa and skilled in taniwha slaying. His name is Te Ao-kehu, and he lives at Pukerewa. Maybe he will come and help us ..." The people thought about it then replied: "Go and get him; maybe he will work out some means of slaying Tutaeporoporo for us."

Tama-ahua agreed to go.

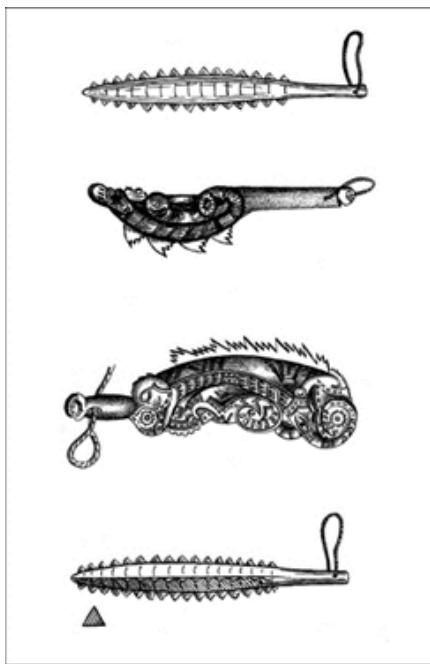
He set off overland from Putiki to Waitotara, and on his arrival there he found that all the Ngā Rauru and the Ngāti-Ruanui tribes had already heard of Tutaeporoporo's mischief. He was informed of where the great taniwha slayer was living so he went to see Te Ao-kehu. He met him and "I have come to you because all our people have been taken by a taniwha that has taken over the Whanganui River. Our homes are left and the land is desolate, for everyone is scattered to places where the taniwha cannot get." In reply, Te Ao-kehu said "We have heard of this taniwha, and will try to help you. Arise, and go, for tomorrow I will be there." So Tama-ahua returned.



A representation of Te
Aokehu and
Tutaeporoporo as carved
by Takirirangi Smith

Next morning, before breakfast, Aokeyhu started off for Whanganui, accompanied by seventy of his people. He took with him his two famous maripi named Taitimu and Taiparoa, which were shaped something like a saw, with shark's teeth inserted along both edges. When he arrived at Totarapuku he met Tama-ahua and his people, and after the customary greeting he asked where the monster dwelt. Tama-ahua replied: "You see that ridge yonder (Shakespeare Cliff), it is below!"

Te Aokeyhu pondered for a while about how he would approach the taniwha without being seen, and decided he needed to use trickery and deceit so arranged for his people to get a log and cut out a box, long enough to hold a man, and also to make a close-fitting lid to it.



MIRA-TUATINI (Shark's tooth knife).

Soon the box was completed, and he got inside it, taking Taitimu and Taiparoa with him; the lid was tied on, the holes filled with clay to make it watertight, and he was launched onto the river.

The people ascended the ridge to look on.

Soon the box drifted down near the taniwha's lair, and Tutaeporo-poro, smelling the sweet scent of fresh food, came out of his lair and looked around for the source of the smell. He saw the log, and suspecting that the human was hiding on the other side of it, snuck up to the log, opened his mouth and swallowed both box and Te Aokehu!

Many karakia next proceeded from the box, one of which has been recorded by Wiremu Kauika of Ngāti Ruanui thus:

Ko au! ko au! ko Tu! he ariki!

Ko au! ko Tu!

Ko tōu ariki i runga nei,

Ka whanatu au ki te kura-winiwini i raro nei,

5. Ki te kura-wanawana i raro nei,

Ki te pipipi i raro nei,

Ki te potipoti i raro nei,

Ko koe, koia rukuhia, koia whaia,

Ki te tuapapa o tōu whare,

10. I tū ai tō iho,

I tū ai tō tira,

I tū ai to mauri,

I herea ai to kaha ki a au,

Ki a Rangi-nui e tū nei,

15. Whakaruhi! whakamoe!

O—oi!

Ko au, ka whanatu ki o tuatara,

E riri mai na, e nguha mai nā,

Titia! titia, te poupou o tō manawa,

20. Titia te pou o tō iho,

'Tis I! 'Tis I! 'Tis Tu! a lord!

'Tis I! 'Tis Tu!

Thy lord above here,

Advancing to the fearsome demon below there,

5. To the awesome demon below there,

To the maelstrom below there,

To the stinging power below there,

'Tis thou, that is dived for, that is followed,

To the foundation of thy dwelling,

10. Where rests thy seat of strength,

Where stand thy spines,

Where rests thy very soul,

(In vain) thou bindest me with thy powers,

By the great heavens that stand above,

15. Be exhausted! Be overcome with sleep!

O—oi!

'Tis I that advancest to thy spiney back,

That in anger appears, that rages there,

Transfix! transfix the support of thy heart,

20. Transfix! the pillar of thy strength,

That supports thy life and generates thy actions.

Then Te Aokeyhu began slashing at the bindings which held the lid of his box and lifted the lid off. He then took his famous maripi Tai-timu and Taiparoa and set to work hacking at poor Tutaeporoporo's insides. Poor Tutaeporoporo had never felt so much pain, and began to writhe around in agony! Te Aokeyhu continued to strike at the internal organs until Tutaeporoporo could no longer stand the pain and died.

When Te Aokeyhu realised that Tutaeporoporo has died, he then began another karakia to raise the body of Tutaeporoporo from the depths of the river ...

Te tuapapa i raro nei, maiangi ake,

Kia au te toka i raro nei,

Maiangi ake ki runga nei,

Kia au ki tō kauhou i tū ai koe

5. I rere ai koe ki te mokopu-o-rangi,

Ko koe, koia, hikitia,

Ko koe, koia hapainga

Tangi te to, hiki! ē! ē!

The solid foundations below there; rise up!

Firm as the rock below is,

It shall rise up here above.

Firm as is the supernatural power thou trustest in,

5. Thou shalt rise to the daylight surface,

As soon as the great body of the monster drifted ashore at the mouth of the Pu-rua creek, the people from the Pā rushed down to the water's edge. They first released Te Aokehu from the body of Tutaeporoporo, and then proceeded to hack away at the object of their anger and frustrations. From the belly of the taniwha they recovered the bodies of all who had been previously swallowed, men, women, and children. These they carried to the pā on the hill above and there buried them. Waka, taonga and other assorted items were also recovered and a number of these taonga were sent to families of the victims at various parts of the river; along with parts of the taniwha so that people would know that the taniwha who had wreaked havoc on the river was no more.

The remains of the body of the taniwha were left as food for the birds of the air and the fish of the sea.

An old song was composed about Tutaeporoporo:

Nei ka noho i te whare,
Kopana i te tito panā,
Nau i ki mai kaore aku puakanga,
Maku e tiki atu ki te pu ki te weu,

5. Ki te aka ki ata pore,
Maku ano ko taua aruhe
no koure tahi ka iri Tara-moana,
Waiho i te whakaruru tu
e tai noho pupuke kai,

10. Roto i to hinengaro i tikina atu ai nga whatu i rukuhia,
Mau (e) kimihia ki reira,
Mau ka kitea ki reira hoaina,
Ka ngawha koia
te Awhio-rangi,

15. Ka tipu te tangata, ka makona
to takapu e tito mai na,
Koia ano kei a koe e Kahu-taka
mai au he rakau whatiwhati,

20. Ka whati te tokotoko
Kauika nei e Maihi-rangi,
Ki ahau e Tama,
he ika e tere ana
na te Pu-o-te-Kawa,

25. I u tiki ki runga ki te Wai-tahu-parae,

Reside I within my habitation
Collecting thoughts but dimly visioned
You have stated I know not truth
So will I reach down to foundations

5. The very root of all our (Maori) knowledge
Starting with the fernroot.
Your ancestor Tara-moana
Who was killed and hung in the shade
Of the all-embracing, food-heaping tide—

10. But spread not this story abroad
Let your thoughts dive (into history)
For the sacred stones
Search, and these shall be revealed
Awhio-rangi (the sacred axe)

15. Was shapen from these stones
And man came forth, was satisfied
And added to the sacred lore
Which you have now received from Kahu-taka
Some affirm this lore is incorrect

20. And liken it to broken weapons,
Used by Kauika and Maihi-rangi.
To me, O son (these reports are as)
A fish floating on the sea,
Drifting along by Te Pu-o-te-kawa

25. And thence directly to Wai-tahu-parae
To investigate the lair of Tutaē-poroporo
Which is open to view yonder.

Tutaeporoporo as depicted in a whakairo that used to be at Lake Alice Hospital.

It is now in the possession of the iwi.

