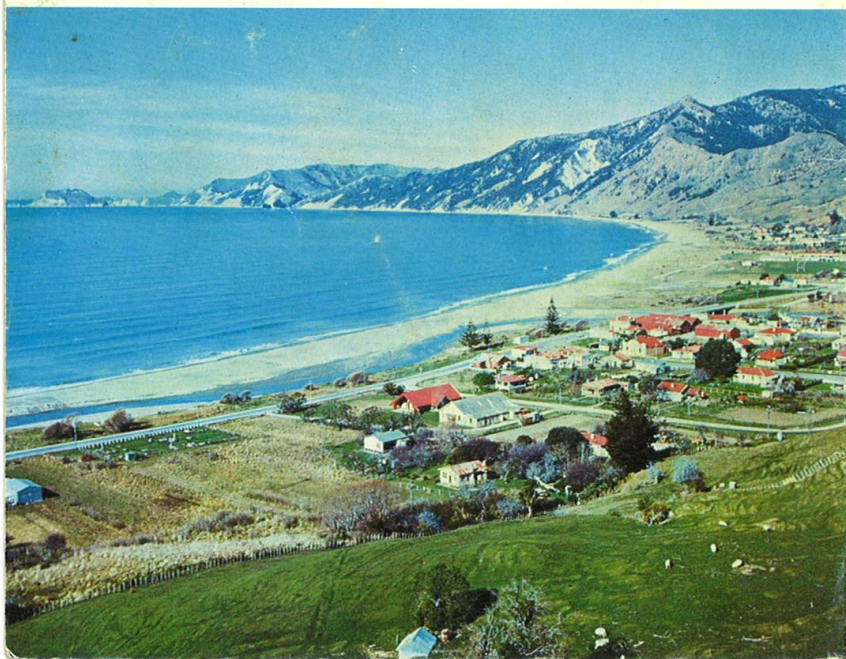




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The Story of

TE HONO KI RAROTONGA

CARVED MEETING HOUSE and

HINE-MATIKOTAI

DINING HALL

PAKIRIKIRI MARAE, TOKOMARU BAY, NEW ZEALAND



The late Tuini Ngawai, I Whanau 1910 – I Mate 12 O Akuhata 1965.
A woman of dignity and true faith, a genius, author, and composer,
Founder of Te Hokowhitu Atu 1936, and unity of her Māori people.

Front cover picture: Te Hono Ki Rarotonga carved meeting house. The figure-head dominating Te Hono Ki Rarotonga is designed to bring about the meeting of the people of Rarotonga and the people of Tokomaru Bay.

ORIGIN AND HISTORY

The reasons for the erection of Te Hono Ki Rarotonga, carved meeting-house, go back some 200 years, for there have been several meeting-houses in this vicinity. These include: Kirikiri, Hikihiki, Tamawhakapeka and Ruatepukepuke (belonging to Mokena Romio), Tumokai, Maui, Rerekohu (belonging to Wi Pewhairangi), Rongotukiwaho (belonging to Wi Potae), Poho-o-maru, Te Haetu (belonging to Tamatea Kuhakauri), Paraumu, Rangitaururu (belonging to Tawairau).

These meeting-houses were situated on the Maraes of Pakirikiri, Pa Maioro, Araiara (at Mangahauini), Maungatio (at Tawhiti), Kaingapi, Maunaroa (inland of Tawhiti), Tuatini and Kairangi.

One of these meeting-houses, named "Rerekohu", was built about the year 1784. The house, in the course of years, became the repository of many tribal relics. Because of an expected invasion from tribal enemies, the house was completely dismantled to save it from desecration at the hands of the enemies. The rich carvings were immersed in whale oil and then buried in the bed of the Mangahauini stream.

In time, the people of Tokomaru Bay decided to rebuild this meeting-house. The site chosen was on the corner of what is now Potae Street and Moana Street. The elder of the tribe at that time was Mokena Romio, who was a descendant of George Babbington, one of the first white men to settle in Tokomaru Bay. He established a whaling station at St. Patrick's Cove, Te Mawhai Point.

The meeting-house was to have been built with the carvings of "Rerekohu", but the original carvings were lost through a change in the course of the Mangahauini. The new meeting-house was built with one ridge-pole, and had no windows. It was eighty feet in length and was fully carved.

At that time, Christianity arrived in Tokomaru Bay. The preachers used to stand outside the meeting-house and read prayers and psalms to those inside. In time the people learnt the prayers and psalms by heart.

In 1885, an American geologist, passing through the district, was struck with the beauty of the carvings of the newer "Rerekohu". After many negotiations, he succeeded in buying the house in its entirety, for the Museum, where, it is understood, it has enjoyed an honoured place to this day.

Next in the line of houses in this area was "Maui", a handsome building which was erected in 1890. In 1912, it was removed to Hikuwai, about 10 miles south of Tokomaru Bay.

Some years later, the people thought that to maintain the prestige of the Maori people, which at that time was dwindling, they would erect another meeting-house. The building of the new meeting-house had been partly inspired by the utterances of General Sir Charles Fergusson (Governor-General of New Zealand), supported by the urging of the late Lady Ariha Ngata and those of Sir Apirana Ngata (Minister of Native Affairs) himself.

The main incentive behind this idea was Wiremu Potae. Wiremu Potae donated one thousand pounds at the commencement of this project, which was used by Sir Apirana Ngata in the establishment of the Rotorua School of Art (Te Aomarama), in 1927.

The principal carvers engaged in this meeting-house were Pine Taiapa (Ngati-Porou), Waka Graham and Wiremu Puketapu, under the directorship of Harold Hamilton. The tukutuku work was carried out by the women of Tokomaru Bay, while the building was in the course of erection. It was following a suggestion made by two Misses Busby that the carvings were finished in walnut stain, and not in the standard red ochre.

Although carved in Rotorua during 1928, the erection of the meeting-house was delayed by six years, to allow the people of Rarotonga to attend the opening ceremony. In 1930, Sir Apirana Ngata and Wiremu Potae visited Rarotonga with other Maori Chiefs, to enable a Maori Chief of New Zealand to invite the people of Rarotonga to participate in the official opening of a carved meeting-house. It is significant that this was the first time the Maori of Hawaiki and the Maori of New Zealand had met on common ground. Hence, when that did eventuate, the name of the house was sealed — "Te Hono Ki Rarotonga".

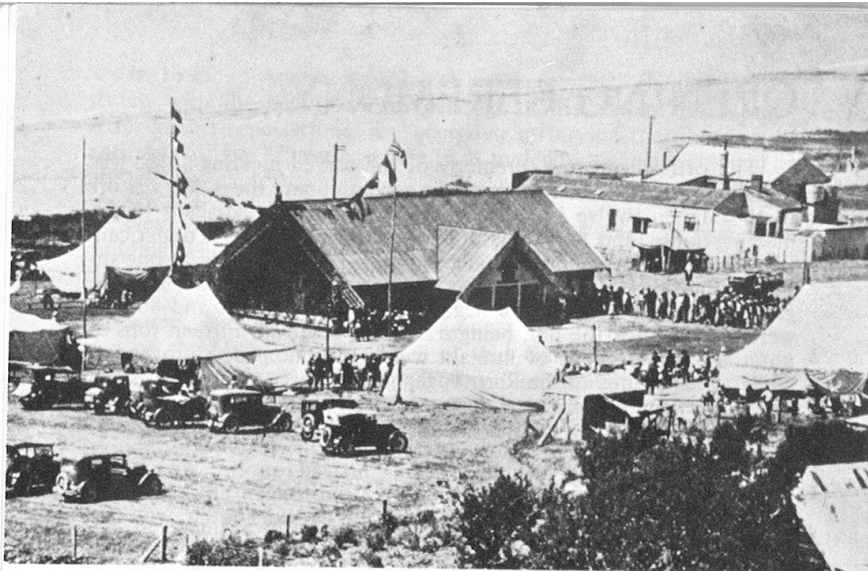
Te Hono Ki Rarotonga was the first of the modern carved meeting-houses on the East Coast, second only to Te Poho-o-Rawiri, at Gisborne.

OPENING CEREMONY

The official opening ceremony of the carved meeting-house was the climax to a week's festivities. To accommodate the 3,000 visitors to the Marae, twelve large marquees were erected, adjacent to the meeting-house, and there was dining accommodation also under canvas. Dining arrangements included seating for 500 people at one sitting. Some idea of the preparation, on the domestic side, may be gained from the fact that 50 head of cattle, 300 sheep, and 80 pigs were set aside for the hui, being donations received. Fifteen tons of potatoes and ten tons of kumara were also among the provender, while the appetites of the Rarotongan guests were tempted by Island products, including taros and coconuts which were specially obtained for their visit.

The guests to the official opening arrived on the Wednesday afternoon, and included a party of six Rarotongan arikis, accompanied by their wives. They were led by Makea Nui Tinirau, who was handed the key to the meeting-house. A brief ceremony then followed, to lift the atmosphere of the workmen from the building. The lifting of the tapu from the building was performed the following morning, in private, and the building dedicated to the service of the Maori people.





Opening day, January 25th, 1934.

Ngati-Porou party, led by Sir Apirana Ngata.



Rarotongan party.

The official opening ceremony took place at 10.30 a.m. on Thursday, 25th January, 1934, and was followed by the unveiling of the figure-head by Makea Tinirau of the Rarotongan party, in compliment to the visitors from overseas. The first to enter the building were the leaders of the visiting party and the host tribe.

As hospitable people, the people of Tokomaru Bay asked the people of Rarotonga to give the meeting-house a name also. They named it "Te Auki Tonga" — embracing some loved ones toward the south. Thus the meeting-house has two names.

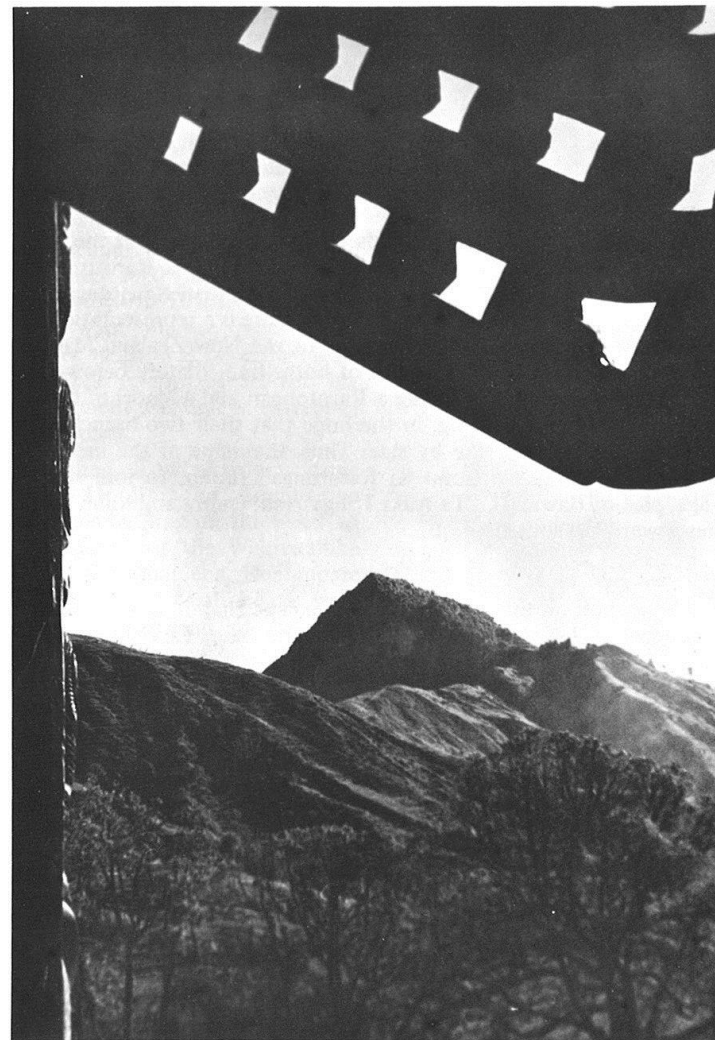
Rarotongan party, led by Makea Nui Tinirau.





Nan Matahiki, Teo
Kaurangi, and Moreana
Grant of the Tokomaru
Bay welcoming party.

Rarotongan party.



Marotiri Hill seen from the meeting-house.
Marotiri te maunga, Mangahauini te awa, Whanau-a-Rua te iwi.