



ERUERA MAIHI PATUONE

THE STORY OF A GREAT RANGATIRA

as told by FRASER SMITH
(a great-great-great-great-grandson)

Eruera Maihi Patuone lived to be 108 (some say he was 112). Over his long life, he would witness enormous change. Patuone was a boy when Captain Cook first arrived, and he was one of the first rangatira to sign Te Tiriti o Waitangi. As a warrior, he fought with both traditional weapons and muskets. Later in life, he became a peacemaker. Like his cousin Hongi Hika, Patuone was a descendant of Rāhiri, who in turn descended from Kupe. Patuone was born the third son of Tāpua, a Hokianga chief and tohunga. His mother, Te Kawehau, was also highly born.

THE SHIP

One day in 1769, when Patuone was about five, his father was out fishing near Motukōkako (Piercy Island) when he saw a strange waka. It looked like a floating island. The fishermen went to investigate, throwing some of their trevally to the pale, oddly dressed men. The ship was the *Endeavour*, and Captain Cook invited Patuone's father and some of the other men on board. They were given gifts, including a leg of pork, a food unknown to Māori. Later, Patuone and his sister ate the pork. They declared it sweet and very good.

The coming of these strangers had been predicted by tūpuna years before. "Look to the sea and beware," they said. In the decades that followed, many more ships arrived, bringing fortune-seekers, whalers, sealers, traders, and escaped convicts from Australia. The needs of these newcomers were many, and Māori were eager to trade for axes, spades, fish-hooks, and muskets. Iron from Pākehā was highly prized. Even a simple nail was a treasure.

A NEW LEADER

When Patuone was born, his people believed he was destined for greatness, the chosen one who would inherit his father's mana. From an early age, he was taught hand-to-hand combat, history, and whakapapa – all the skills he'd need to be a tohunga, warrior, and leader of his hapū, Ngāti Hao. Tāpua had another prophecy for his son: "Hei tangata pai koe, māu e hohou te rongō." (You will be a good man, a peacemaker.)

As a young man, Patuone fought alongside his father and brothers in many battles. These were difficult years. War was always present in the far north as competing hapū struggled to gain land and power. Patuone's two oldest brothers were killed by the time he was twenty, but Patuone and his younger brother Nene survived, and their reputation as warriors grew. In 1806, Patuone fought in the battle of Waituna, using a mere pounamu to kill the enemy rangatira Tatakahuanui.

c. 1764

Patuone is born.

1769

Cook's first visit to New Zealand.

1806

The battle of Waituna, which helps establish Patuone's reputation as a great warrior.

TRADE

By the early 1800s, many northern hapū were growing food to trade with Pākehā. They had learnt that potatoes were easier to grow than kūmara; now they could produce three crops a year instead of one. Many hapū also had mōkai (war captives) to work in the fields as well as ploughs, horses, bullocks, and tools, all of which saved labour and increased production.

Patuone made the most of new opportunities. He grew wheat and other crops for trade, and he and Nene became involved in a shipyard in Hōreke, on the Hokianga Harbour. Many ships were travelling up and down the coast, and they needed a place to resupply. In 1826, Patuone made his first trip to Sydney to spread the word that Hokianga Harbour, under his protection, was a good place for ships to anchor. Patuone could provide them with potatoes, pork, flax, wheat, timber, and kauri spars, which were in high demand to make masts for ships.

Patuone wasn't the only rangatira in the north who wanted to do business with Pākehā. Hongi Hika had his own plans for trade on nearby Whangaroa Harbour. Although related, Patuone and Hongi were rivals, especially when it came to the missionaries. Mission stations in Northland meant more ships would come, and so both rangatira wanted a good relationship with the missionaries.

The shipyard at Hōreke



1814

New Zealand's first mission station is established in Rangihoua.

1818

The Musket Wars begin.

1826

The Hōreke shipyard is established.

THE MISSIONARIES

New Zealand's first missionary was the Anglican Samuel Marsden. He arrived in 1814. By 1845, there were eleven mission stations in the North Island – Anglican, Wesleyan, and Catholic. The missionaries introduced Western ideas about farming and trade as well as religion, and they often taught Māori to read and write. They also preached against Māori traditions, including the keeping of mōkai, having more than one wife, tribal warfare, and cannibalism. Māori values such as mana, utu, tapu, and noa were also discouraged.

Despite their influence, the missionaries still lived in a world that was overwhelmingly Māori. While they'd come to New Zealand to spread their ideas, especially about religion, the missionaries had to adapt. And Māori had their own way of interpreting Christianity so it was a better fit with their beliefs. This approach greatly troubled many missionaries.



The mission station at Māngungu

THE MUSKET WARS

Patuone was related to many powerful Ngāpuhi chiefs: Hongi Hika, Pōmare, Muriwai, and Hōne Heke Pōkai. These rangatira led many taua (war parties) that travelled vast distances to avenge past wrongs.

From 1818, Ngāpuhi launched a series of expeditions that covered much of the North Island. At first, Ngāpuhi had a huge advantage. They were the first Māori to trade with Pākehā, which gave them access to muskets. Māori had never used these weapons before, and so the battles that followed were part of what was later called the Musket Wars.

Patuone and Nene took part in some of these campaigns, including the first Āmiowhenua expedition in 1819. Using these new weapons, unknown to Māori in the south, they won many battles and took many mōkai. By the time the Musket Wars ended in the north in the 1830s, more than twenty thousand Māori had died.



Heke Pōkai (left) and Patuone

LAW AND ORDER

Hongi Hika died in 1828. It was the start of a difficult time for Patuone. Not long after, his wife and three of his children died within six months, probably from tuberculosis. Patuone became restless. He visited Sydney a second time, then married Takarangī, the sister of a Ngāti Pāoa chief from Whakatīwai. Patuone began to spend a lot of time in the area, trading flax and timber. He also maintained pā at Whakatīwai and at Pūtiki on Waiheke Island.

As the settler population continued to grow, so did the problems. Ships carrying rum often docked in Hokianga, leading to drunken behaviour and fights. Patuone and other rangatira wanted to ban alcohol from the rohe. Sometimes, he arranged for people to paddle out to the ships to tip the drink overboard.

In 1831, rumours spoke of more trouble: the French planned to colonise New Zealand. Patuone, Nene, and eleven other Ngāpuhi rangatira gathered at Kerikeri to sign a petition, asking the British king for protection. The result was He Whakaputanga (the Declaration of Independence). This was signed by thirty-four rangatira, including Patuone and Nene. He Whakaputanga promised that Māori would continue to rule over their land and Britain would protect them from other countries. Afterwards, Māori flew the United Tribes flag, and British ships fired cannons to celebrate.



Kororāreka

1826

Patuone's first visit to Sydney.

1827

A mission station is established at Māngungu under Patuone's protection.

1835

He Whakaputanga is signed.



PARTNERSHIP AND WAR

Five years later, Patuone was part of another landmark signing: Te Tiriti o Waitangi. Many rangatira were against Te Tiriti. Some wanted to push the Pākehā back into the sea, but Patuone and Nene believed it was too late. Nene said, “We now have twenty-year-old children who have come from the Pākehā.” Patuone spoke for peace and acceptance, and over the next seven months, more than five hundred rangatira would sign Te Tiriti.



Patuone wanted a peaceful life with Pākehā, but after Te Tiriti, some Māori grew frustrated. The British were breaking promises. Heke Pōkai expressed this frustration, cutting down the British flagpole at Kororāreka three times. A few months later, he attacked soldiers based in the town. In response, the British launched a military campaign against the Ngāpuhi chief and his ally, Te Ruki Kawiti. This was the start of the Northern War.

THE NEW ZEALAND WARS

The Northern War was the first of many between the government and Māori in the mid-nineteenth century. These wars were about who owned the land and who controlled the country. Most of the fighting was centred in four regions: Northland (1845–46), Taranaki (1860–61 and 1863–69), Waikato (1863–64), and Bay of Plenty/East Coast (1864–72). Although Māori sometimes had the upper hand, especially in Northland, they eventually lost. The government was able to sustain a long military campaign, but it was difficult for Māori, who had fewer resources and people to fight. By the end, Māori were heavily outnumbered. After the wars, the government punished Māori by taking millions of hectares of land.

The government siege on the pā at Ruapekapeka



1838

Ngāpuhi involvement in the Musket Wars ends.

1840

Patuone is baptised on 26 January and given the name Eruera Maihi (Edward Marsh).

1840

The first rangatira sign Te Tiriti o Waitangi on 6 February.

1844

Heke Pōkai cuts down the flagpole at Kororāreka for the first time on 8 July.

1845

The Northern War starts.

1846

The Northern War ends.

BRIDGE BETWEEN TWO WORLDS

Patuone was in his eighties when the Northern War broke out. He and Nene didn't support Heke Pōkai. The brothers believed the Pākehā were there to stay; it was better if their people sided with the British – in a limited way. However, when Heke Pōkai was defeated, Nene advised the government not to take his land.

Patuone also had a lot of influence over government officials. There were many misunderstandings between Māori and Pākehā, and his reputation as a peacemaker meant he was often asked to help. When Patuone's third wife, Riria, died in 1849, his people wanted him to return to Hokianga. But Governor Grey valued Patuone's presence in Auckland – he was an important bridge between two worlds – and so he gave Patuone a large piece of land at Takapuna Beach. It was a shrewd decision that paid off just a few years later, when Ngāti Pāoa warriors arrived in Auckland to avenge the arrest of their rangatira. Patuone negotiated their peaceful withdrawal. In 1865, Wellington became the country's new capital. The politicians continued to ask Patuone's opinion, although he wasn't always listened to.



The British waiting to invade Waikato, 1863

1852

Patuone moves to Takapuna.

1863

The government invades Waikato in July, against Patuone's advice.

1865

Wellington becomes the country's capital.

“IN NO WAY
NEGLECT KINDNESS;
IT IS A POWER THAT
WILL HELP YOU.”

Eruera Maihi Patuone
c. 1764–1872



A CENTURY OF CHANGE

Patuone died on 19 September 1872. In the weeks before his death, Māori travelled from around the country to pay their respects. Patuone didn't want a traditional tangi. Instead, five hundred people – Māori and Pākehā – gathered for a state funeral in Auckland. He was buried in the Mount Victoria cemetery in Te Hau Kapua/Devonport, close to where he had lived for many years. The government erected a plaque by the grave. It described Patuone as a “warm friend of Europeans, supporter of the Queen's laws, and peacemaker”. Although Patuone had at least nine children, only one, Hohaia, survived to have children of his own. Before his death, Patuone told his son, “In no way neglect kindness; it is a power that will help you.”

1872

The New Zealand Wars end in late February.

1872

Patuone dies and is buried in Auckland.

1876

The Life and Times of Patuone by C.O. Davis is published.

