

Huria Matenga 1840-1842?-1909

Huria Matenga was born in the early 1840s at Wakapuaka north of Nelson. She was named Ngarongoa at birth but also known as Ngā Hota and in later life, as Huria Matenga she was Ariki Kahutaratara (High chieftain of scattered tribes) her lineage could be traced back to many Tokomaru and Tainui tribes. Her Paternal Grandfather was the Paramount chief of Ngāti Tama, Te Puoho ki te Rangi. Her father was Wiremu Katene Te Puoho the Paramount chief at Wakapuaka and her mother was Wikitoria Te Amohau daughter of Tatana te keha chief of Te Ati Awa in Mohua.



Marriage

Takawaenga (mediators, buffer states or go between) marriages were strategically arranged, some marriages were negotiated to halt the possible outbreak of open warfare. They were always between two persons of status and always with approval of both tribes. As was common in her era, in 1858 Ngaronga at the age of sixteen, Huria married her second cousin Hemi Matenga younger brother of the Hon. Wi Parata te Kakakura grandsons of Waipunahau, Kauhoe's older sister. Hemi Matenga also had Ariki lines into Ngāti Toarangatira through his Grandfather Te Rangihiroa chief of Ngāti Toa and Kapiti Island and younger brother of Te Peehi Kupe who were also first cousins to Paremata. The need to maintain these connections were often the reason to secure relationship links for future generations.

From this Takawaenga union Huria had a whangai daughter named Mamae, her first and second cousin Ngawaina, daughter of Paremata Te Wahapiro and Ngamianga Taiaroa, had the child with Hemi Matenga, Nagwaina was also second cousin to Hemi Matenga. Bloodline relationships often provided stability between tribes, protected lands and on other occasions acquire peace. Mamae's birth into both her whangai and biological whakapapa (ancestry) was intrinsically planned. The wisdom and foresight of her tupuna (ancestors), is a defined description of Māori Lore in the 1800's, Mamae was a result of not only securing lands but also commemorates the amity between Ngāti Tama, Te Ati Awa, Ngāti Mutunga, Ngāi Tahu and Ngāti Toa at Wakapuaka.



Hemi Matenga

Huria Matenga

Lifestyle

Renowned for her beauty and her distinguished leadership qualities Huria was not only famous for her hospitality but was also an exceptional weaver of flax (harakeke).

Her profound Manaakitanga was famous throughout the country; one example was during the incarceration of her mother Wikitoria Te Amohau's relatives the Peace Revolutionists Tohu Kākahi and Te Whiti-o-Rongomai of Parihaka. Huria Matenga was vigilant in making sure their Mana (Spiritual Authority) was maintained and food was accessible while staying in the Nelson District. It was also documented that they too spent time with their whanaunga (relatives) in Wakapuaka.

The lifestyle of Huria and Hemi was of grand English, they were celebrated hosts both to Maori and Pakeha. Their home relished all the luxuries of a Victorian way of life and they even had a Ballroom where they would entertain both Māori and Pākehā dignitaries. For many years Hemi and Huria lived a privileged life opposed to many other Māori of their time.

In her later years, Huria leaned more towards sustaining her Māori heritage she also chose to discard her English attire and choose to wear her own clothing. Years later she posed in the three Lindauer portraits, where she wore her Korowai (cloaks). The pictures of Huria in the same cloak, in this article are made of muka (fibres of the flax) only; a lot of patience was needed when making this specific korowai as the process and preparation demanded diligence.



Delaware Bay Shipwreck

Huria Matenga, Hemi Matenga and Hohapata Hurumutu gained national prominence in 1863. On the night of 3-4 September the brig *Delaware*, on its way from Nelson to Napier, ran into a storm and was thrown onto the rocks at the foot of the cliffs at Wakapuaka. Huria Matenga in her early twenties along with her accomplices saw the complications of the crew and came to help. Nine of the crew reached the shore, the only casualty was the chief mate.

At a ceremony supervised by the Superintendent of Nelson, the rescuers were praised for their benevolence and their unambiguous manner during the shipwreck. Huria was given an inscribed gold watch along with fifty pounds. Hemi and Hopata also received fifty pounds along with silver watches as did Eraia and Kerei, along with their ten pounds. At the ceremony the Superintendent failed to mention the Government's contribution came from the Native Reserve Trust fund.

Huria had gardens at Turakiwaru, the spit in Delaware Bay and was often seen swimming in the estuary on her way to tend to her gardens. She made visits to her whanau in Taranaki and Wellington and maintained her Leadership at Wakapuaka right up until her death in 1909. Her funeral was meant to have attracted over 2,000 people. Both Maori and Pakeha from all over New Zealand came to farewell a woman of courage, strength and great beauty.

Whakairo prepared by Sheree Klenner (re Ngati Tama ki Wakapuaka – June 2020)