

PIAHANA HOU: A NGATI RAHIRI RANGATIRA

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THE UNIVERSITY OF  
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*Te Whare Wānanga o Waikato*

## PIAHANA HOU: A NGATI RAHIRI RANGATIRA

**Abstract:** *Piahana Hou, as the half-brother of Karauna Hou, had an illustrious ancestry, but to Pakeha he was known as, briefly, the skipper of a river steamer and, for most of his life, as a labourer. His interests in several blocks of land enabled him to obtain money through selling some of his holdings, but he never became prosperous. He had minimal involvement in mining at Te Aroha.*

*Piahana came to prominence not as a rangatira but as a drunk, who was even involved in a bar fight at Te Aroha. Despite this weakness, his high status meant that hundreds attended his splendid tangi. Unlike some other rangatira, he did not use his status to play an important role in either Maori or Pakeha society.*

### ANCESTRY AND AGE

In 1897 Piahana Hou informed the land court ‘I am also known as Kau Hou. Karauna Hou was my half brother’.<sup>1</sup> Although he stated that Karauna was his younger brother, by his father’s second wife, Taha,<sup>2</sup> in February 1893 he gave his age as 36, meaning he was born in 1856 or early 1857,<sup>3</sup> meaning Karauna was much older than him.<sup>4</sup> Three years before his death in 1910, he described himself as having been ‘only a boy’ in 1878,<sup>5</sup> a curious description of his age. His obituary estimated he was aged ‘about 55’,<sup>6</sup> making his date of birth around 1855; on the burial register, his age was given as 60.<sup>7</sup>

Several whakapapa were given, varying in detail depending on the block being considered. In 1886 he gave these ancestors:

Ruinga

Te Aue

<sup>1</sup> Maori Land Court, Hauraki Minute Book no. 45, p. 221.

<sup>2</sup> Maori Land Court, Hauraki Minute Books, no. 19, p. 38; no. 28B, p. 180.

<sup>3</sup> Armed Constabulary Force, Return of Charges Taken at Te Aroha Lock Up 1880-1903, 1/1893, in private possession.

<sup>4</sup> Maori Land Court, Hauraki Minute Books, no. 19, p. 38; no. 28B, p. 180.

<sup>5</sup> Maori Land Court, Hauraki Minute Book no. 56, p. 116.

<sup>6</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 28 April 1910, p. 2.

<sup>7</sup> Church of England, Piako Register of Maori Deaths 1902-1910, entry for 30 April 1910, Anglican Diocesan Archives, Hamilton.

Te Rangitumanau

Petutahi

Tukoro

Hou, his father, who married Ngarima.<sup>8</sup> When repeating this sequence in 1907, there were variant spellings: Te Awe, Te Rangitumamao, and Patutahi.<sup>9</sup>

In 1889 his descent through his mother's line was given:

Kapakapa

Tamanoho

Nukurau

Te Waipuna

Mowhaho

Ngarima, who had three children, Piahana, and his two sisters, Moewaka Hou and Mei Hou.<sup>10</sup> His mother's full name was Ngarima Ngonge.<sup>11</sup> Another whakapapa gave her name as Mere Moaho alias Ngarima, because either her father or mother was Moaho.<sup>12</sup> In 1890 her whakapapa was extended back another generation, the spelling of one name was slightly different, and the sequence of two ancestors was reversed:

Tumutumu

Kapakapa

Tamanoho

Nukurau

Moawaho

Waipuna

Ngarima.<sup>13</sup>

His father's line, given on this occasion, also varied:

Tamariki

Te Atua (younger brother of Te Tumutumu)

Puke

Motu

Kurakura

Tuatini

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<sup>8</sup> Maori Land Court, Hauraki Minute Book no. 19, p. 33.

<sup>9</sup> Maori Land Court, Hauraki Minute Book no. 56, p. 117.

<sup>10</sup> Maori Land Court, Hauraki Minute Book no. 22, p. 277.

<sup>11</sup> Maori Land Court, Hauraki Minute Book no. 24, p. 69.

<sup>12</sup> Maori Land Court, Hauraki Minute Book no. 63, p. 157.

<sup>13</sup> Maori Land Court, Hauraki Minute Book no. 24, p. 63.

Ronu

Te Poupou

Te Urumahinga, who married Wakamara, and whose son was Hou.<sup>14</sup>

When Okauia was before the court in 1900, Rewi Mokena gave a whakapapa:

Tangata

Hikahaere

Roniu

Te Popou

Te Urumahina, who married Tukoro

Hou.<sup>15</sup>

## LIFE

Unlike most rangatira who appeared before the land court, Piahana did not give many details of his early life. In 1907 he mentioned that before 1875 he 'was the captain of another steamer at that time, plying between Paeroa & Te Aroha'.<sup>16</sup> In 1878 he assisted in listing the owners of the Aroha Block. Asked how this was possible when he had described himself as 'only a boy', he explained that 'tho' young, the people allowed me to take part'.<sup>17</sup> In 1892 Reha Aperahama<sup>18</sup> described him as a chief of Ngati Tumutumu,<sup>19</sup> but he did not have a leading role of the affairs of his hapu. Despite his illustrious pedigree, in the following year he was a labourer.<sup>20</sup>

## LAND

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<sup>14</sup> Maori Land Court, Hauraki Minute Book no. 24, p. 55.

<sup>15</sup> Maori Land Court, Hauraki Minute Book no. 52, p. 354.

<sup>16</sup> Maori Land Court, Hauraki Minute Book no. 56, p. 116.

<sup>17</sup> Maori Land Court, Hauraki Minute Book no. 56, pp. 116-117.

<sup>18</sup> See paper on his life.

<sup>19</sup> Maori Land Court, Hauraki Minute Book no. 28A, p. 52.

<sup>20</sup> Armed Constabulary Force, Return of Charges Taken at Te Aroha Lock Up 1880-1903, 1/1893, in private possession.

In 1873 he was recorded as an owner of Waihekau No. 2.<sup>21</sup> In the allocation of land within the Aroha Block in 1878, he was awarded 56 acres at Omahu, whereas his sisters received land both there and at Wairakau.<sup>22</sup> The following year, as a member of Ngati Hinerangi, he became a part owner of Okauia.<sup>23</sup> In 1884 he became an owner of Ohinemuri No. 20C, and in the following year of Ohinemuri No. 13.<sup>24</sup> When his half-brother Karauna died, leaving no children, Piahana and his surviving sister Mei Hou inherited his interest in the Omahu reserve.<sup>25</sup> They also inherited interests in Te Aroha land from their sister Moewaka Hou along with their mother and other relations.<sup>26</sup>

Like other landowners, Piahana leased or sold land whenever he needed money, but having only a small interest received only a small return. All he received in 1874 for his miniscule interest in the Aroha Block was £5.<sup>27</sup> In 1880 he sold his interest of 59 acres in Ohinemuri No. 18 for £14 15s.<sup>28</sup> In late 1890, a Trust Commissioner checked his sale of Aroha Block IX Section 8 Lot 1 to a local farmer,<sup>29</sup> William Hetherington.<sup>30</sup> As nothing further was heard, the sale must have been confirmed. In 1894 he received £1 15s 5d for his interest in Ohinemuri No. 20B.<sup>31</sup>

As successors to their sister in land at Wairakau, he and Mei Hou in 1896 leased Aroha Block XII Sections 38 and 46 for £3 5s a year and £6 4s a

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<sup>21</sup> Maori Land Court, Waikato Minute Book no. 3, p. 111.

<sup>22</sup> Te Aroha Block, Allocations by James Mackay, 24 August 1878, Maori Affairs Department, MA 1, 13/86, ANZ-W.

<sup>23</sup> Maori Land Court, Waikato Minute Book no. 4, p. 181.

<sup>24</sup> Maori Land Court, Hauraki Minute Books, no. 16, p. 406; no. 19, p. 13.

<sup>25</sup> Maori Land Court, Hauraki Minute Book no. 19, p. 38.

<sup>26</sup> Maori Land Court, Hauraki Minute Books, no. 22, pp. 277-279; no. 24, p. 69; no. 54, p. 339.

<sup>27</sup> Register of Payments to Individuals for Purchase of Land 1873-1880, Te Aroha, entry for 24 August 1874, Maori Affairs Department, MA-MLP 7/7, ANZ-A.

<sup>28</sup> 'Statement of the Facts and Circumstances Affecting the Ohinemuri Block, Appendices H, I, Lands and Survey Department, LS 36/25a, ANZ-W.

<sup>29</sup> *Thames Star*, 13 October 1890, p. 2.

<sup>30</sup> See *Te Aroha News*, 22 March 1900, p. 2, 29 November 1933, p. 1, 9 March 1934, p. 7.

<sup>31</sup> 'Statement of the Facts and Circumstances Affecting the Ohinemuri Block', Appendix H, Lands and Survey Department, LS 36/25a, ANZ-W.

year respectively.<sup>32</sup> In 1905 they sought to sell the latter to the lessee because of their indebtedness to him. The District Maori Land Council refused to remove the restrictions on sale because the rent was reasonable and if they sold the land they would be in a far worse position.<sup>33</sup> In 1896 he and his sister leased Aroha Block IX Section 28 Part of Lot 2A, over 41 acres, to a timber merchant, and builder, James Lavery,<sup>34</sup> for £7 14s a year.<sup>35</sup> The following year they leased Aroha Block IX Section 28 Lot 2, of 84 acres, to him for £7 10s a year.<sup>36</sup> This land ran from the Paeroa Road to the steep beginning of the range. Lot 2A was later described by the Valuation Department as ‘a long, narrow strip of land of awkward shape, fortunately with the good land at the front and readily accessible. It is only useful to be worked with adjoining land. The cost of boundary fencing is prohibitive’.<sup>37</sup>

Owning land did not make Piahana wealthy. When arrested in 1893, the police recorded that he was wearing a ‘brass Geneva watch’ and a ‘metal Albert’ watch chain;<sup>38</sup> more prosperous residents would wear silver ones.<sup>39</sup> Only twice was he sued for unpaid debts. The first was in 1879, when a Thames bootmaker sought £7, which he was ordered to pay.<sup>40</sup> The second, in 1894, was for 3s 6d, owed to a Te Aroha storekeeper, which he paid.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Block Files, Aroha Block XII Section 38, H987; Aroha Block XII Section 46, H1073, Maori Land Court, Hamilton.

<sup>33</sup> Block Files, Aroha Block XII Section 46, Maori Affairs Department, Hamilton, BACS A102, 1905/7, ANZ-A.

<sup>34</sup> See *Te Aroha News*, 28 January 1888, p. 2, 10 November 1888, p. 3, advertisement, 7 May 1898, p. 1, 30 April 1908, p. 3.

<sup>35</sup> Block Files, Aroha Block IX Section 28, Maori Affairs Department, BCAC A622, H1039, ANZ-A.

<sup>36</sup> Maori Land Court, Hauraki Minute Book no. 44, p. 294.

<sup>37</sup> Block Files, Aroha Block IX Section 28 Lot 2A2, Maori Affairs Department, BCAC A517, box 38, file 17-407, ANZ-A.

<sup>38</sup> Armed Constabulary Force, Return of Charges Taken at Te Aroha Lock Up 1880-1903, 1/1893, in private possession.

<sup>39</sup> See Armed Constabulary Force, Return of Charges Taken at Te Aroha Lock Up 1880-1903, in private possession.

<sup>40</sup> Thames Magistrate’s Court, Plaintiff Book 1875-1880, 9/1879, BACL 13737/15b, ANZ-A.

<sup>41</sup> Te Aroha Magistrate’s Court, Civil Record Book 1889-1896, 8/1894, BCDG 11221/1c, ANZ-A.

After his death, his successors sold their interests in the land they inherited.<sup>42</sup>

## MINING

Piahana only invested in mines at Te Aroha. In December 1880 he was a shareholder in a claim at Tui and was one of 13 owners, all Maori, of one marked out in that area but then not registered.<sup>43</sup> The following year he invested in one in January and another in November.<sup>44</sup> None of these claims produced any ore.

## DRINK

Was he the 'Kau (a Maori)' who was fined for being drunk in Thames in 1872?<sup>45</sup> Ten years later 'Kau' was fined 5s for being drunk there, in default to be imprisoned until the rising of the court; he chose the latter.<sup>46</sup> In 1893 he was held in the Te Aroha lock up for being drunk and disorderly, pleaded guilty, and paid the 10s fine.<sup>47</sup>

Drink was responsible for his other entanglements with the law. In September 1882, two weeks after his conviction for being drunk, he was again before the Thames magistrate for using 'profane, obscene and

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<sup>42</sup> See Block Files, Aroha Block IX Section 28, H1039; Te Aroha: No. 1 File, H792, Maori Land Court, Hamilton; Block Files, Aroha Block IX Section 28 Lots 2A, 1A, 11159; Aroha Block IX Section 28 Lot 2A No. 3, 4285, Maori Affairs Department, Hamilton, BACS A102, ANZ-A.

<sup>43</sup> Te Aroha Warden's Court, Register of Te Aroha Claims 1880-1888, folio 204, BBAV 11567/1a; Notices of Marking Out Claims 1880, no. 99, BBAV 11557/1a, ANZ-A.

<sup>44</sup> Te Aroha Warden's Court, Register of Te Aroha Claims 1880-1888, folio 212, BBAV 11567/1a; Plaintiff Book 1880-1898, 2/1881, BBAV 11547/1a, ANZ-A.

<sup>45</sup> Police Court, *Thames Guardian and Mining Record*, 10 July 1872, p. 3.

<sup>46</sup> Thames Magistrate's Court, Criminal Record Book 1881-1883, 252/1882, BACL 13736/35a, ANZ-A; Police Court, *Thames Advertiser*, 1 September 1882, p. 3.

<sup>47</sup> Armed Constabulary Force, Return of Charges Taken at Te Aroha Lock Up 1880-1903, 1/1893, in private possession; Te Aroha Magistrate's Court, Criminal Record Book 1881-1896, 2/1893, BCDG 11220/1a, ANZ-A.

indecent language'.<sup>48</sup> The press gave considerable detail of this offence, under the heading 'The Kauaeranga Bridge Fracas':

Henry Wood<sup>49</sup> deposed that he was a storekeeper residing near the Kauaeranga Bridge. Remembered seeing defendant opposite his door on the 5th inst., in company with two other natives. It was, as near as he could say, about 11 o'clock. Witness was in bed, and so also was his wife, when they were awakened by the natives kicking at the door and the weather-boarding. Dressed himself and went out by the back door, and around to the front fence. The Maoris moved some distance along the road, and afterwards returned, when one of them resumed his operations at the door, the others throwing stones or turf on the house. Witness called out "You had better be off." One of the men came rushing towards him exclaiming, "You b---- pakeha, I'll murder you!" The only words he heard accused utter in English was "You b---- you ought to be killed." To Mr [George Nathaniel] Brassey:<sup>50</sup> Told the natives to be off before they ran along the road. Was standing in the orchard at the time, having been brought out by the threats. Recognised the natives by the light of a match which one of them struck to light his pipe. Witness afterwards hit one of them.

After Wood's wife confirmed that someone she could not identify had used 'all kinds of bad language', Piahana gave evidence:

On the night in question he was returning home from Shortland in company with Hemi Puru and Piha. They called at the hotel near the bridge, and afterwards went to Wood's store to buy bread. Witness and Piha stood in the road, while Puru knocked on the door. No one answered, although there was a candle burning in the kitchen. The door remaining closed, they continued walking along the road. When they were some distance away, Wood came into the garden and called out, "Where are the Maoris?" Hearing his voice they returned. Witness and Piha lingered behind, Puru going first, he having money. Wood returned to the house by the back door, and was inside when Puru reached the verandah. He opened the verandah door, and struck Puru a blow on the forehead. Piha then went to the assistance of his fallen comrade, and, striking a match, found that his face was covered with blood. Witness told them to come away, lest Wood should shoot them and kill them outright. Witness

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<sup>48</sup> Thames Magistrate's Court, Criminal Record Book 1881-1883, 268/1882, BACL 13736/35a, ANZ-A.

<sup>49</sup> See *Thames Star*, 25 August 1883, p. 2, Death Notice, 27 August 1883, p. 2.

<sup>50</sup> See paper on Harry Kenrick.

proposed to go across the bridge and show the wound to Mr [Charles] Winder.<sup>51</sup> Mr Winder came across while they were knocking on the door again. Hemi Puru was vexed, and wanted Wood to come out, but by Mr Winder's advice they went home peaceably. The only bad language used was when Hemi, after being struck, called Wood a b— and invited him to come outside. Witness did not use obscene language, or threaten to kill Wood or abuse his wife.

He told the prosecutor that he was not drunk, and understood English 'a little. Could speak it in connection with small matters such as asking for food. Could swear in English'. Harry Kenrick,<sup>52</sup> the magistrate, 'had once fined him for using the same word as now complained of'. To Kenrick's question he insisted that they had knocked, not kicked, the door, and had given no provocation to Wood before he struck Hemi. 'Had been told by other people that Mr Wood had an aversion to natives, though he had not been objectionable to witness'. After the blow, Hemi wanted to fight Wood but did not use 'any strong language. Something might have been said while witness was away to fetch Winder'.<sup>53</sup>

After Hemi Puru confirmed Piahana's evidence, Wood deposed that Hemi had called out he would 'kill witness, violate his wife, kill his piccaninnies, and burn his store', and when Wood came out of his house rushed up, climbed on his wire fence and exclaimed 'You b---- pakeha, I'll pakaru [break]<sup>54</sup> you!' After he had struck Hemi, the three men had remained near his house for an hour and a half.

The threats were repeated twenty or thirty times. The natives swinging their hands in the air, and sorter<sup>55</sup> danced a war-dance, threatening the extermination of all the sanguinary pakehas in the country. Witness said he would complain of them to [Wirope Hoterini] Taipari and Nikorima, who were also consigned to a similar fate. Could not say whether they were drunk – probably betwixt and between. They had also been there on Sunday morning creating a disturbance. Had no feeling against the

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<sup>51</sup> See *Thames Star*, Magistrate's Court, 13 June 1877, p. 3, Licensing Bench, 8 June 1885, p. 2.

<sup>52</sup> See paper on his life.

<sup>53</sup> Police Court, *Thames Advertiser*, 16 September 1882, p. 2.

<sup>54</sup> P.M. Ryan, *The New Dictionary of Modern Maori* (Auckland, 1974), p. 31.

<sup>55</sup> As recorded.

natives so long as they kept quiet. Did not object to their coming for goods so long as they paid for them.

Wood's wife testified about being scared by the threat to burn the house, and noted that 'Kau had very little to say, but Piha and Hemi were the worst'. Charles Winder, licensee of the Bridge Inn at Parawai, said the three Maori had been in his hotel 'but left just as he was closing'. Understandably, he did not raise the issue of their sobriety.<sup>56</sup> Another report of the trial had Piahana admitting being fined 1s previously for swearing, and that he had had a pint of beer earlier in the day before having three half-pints at Winder's hotel.<sup>57</sup>

Kenrick believed the evidence by Wood and his wife, and commented that Piahana 'had not been as bad as the others, but he believed sufficient had been proved to justify him in ordering that he enter into sureties of the peace for 12 months'. He had to find a surety of £50 himself and two more of £25 each: if they could not be obtained, he would spend three months in Mt Eden gaol. The other offenders were fined.<sup>58</sup> The charge of using 'threatening abusive and insulting words in public place' against Wood was withdrawn.<sup>59</sup> The *Thames Advertiser* applauded the sentence. 'One of the accused (Kau) had been before Mr Kenrick at Te Aroha on a former occasion, and, on being fined for an offence, used some rather uncomplimentary language towards His Worship, who then fined him for contempt of Court'.<sup>60</sup> This offence was not noted in the Te Aroha magistrate's court records: was it a reference to his previous conviction at Thames?

Drink was involved in the last brawl that Piahana was recorded as being involved in, at Te Aroha in October 1888, resulting in his being 'seriously injured'. The *Te Aroha News* explained that the conflict had been 'a debate on the relative worth of the Maori and the Pakeha, which was taken up with much vigour', and the Maori, considering they had won the argument, demanded drinks. When these were refused, both sides became

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<sup>56</sup> Police Court, *Thames Advertiser*, 16 September 1882, pp. 2-3.

<sup>57</sup> Magistrate's Court, *Thames Star*, 15 September 1882, p. 2.

<sup>58</sup> Thames Magistrate's Court, Criminal Record Book 1881-1883, 268/1882, BACL 13736/35a, ANZ-A; Police Court, *Thames Advertiser*, 16 September 1882, p. 3.

<sup>59</sup> Thames Magistrate's Court, Criminal Record Book 1881-1883, 269/1882, BACL 13736/35a, ANZ-A.

<sup>60</sup> *Thames Advertiser*, 16 September 1882, p. 2.

‘very noisy’ the landlord separated them, but in a subsequent disturbance ‘the landlord was thrown down and trampled upon, and a native was struck with a chair, inflicting a scalp wound of a very ugly nature’. After the police arrested two of the brawlers, Piahana, the unnamed ‘native’, was taken by his friends to a chemist for medical treatment.

Piahana charged John Medhurst (of whom nothing is known) with creating the disturbance. The first to give evidence, the police sergeant, ‘stated that on his arrival at the hotel he found a native with his head wounded, and when he asked how he got it the native pointed to the man at present before the bench’. Piahana ‘appeared in Court with his head bound up in a blood-stained bandage’. He said he lived at the Omahu pa and had met the accused first outside one hotel and then outside the second, where he was struck with a chair. ‘Witness did not interfere with the accused’. Te Rua Whakahiro said Piahana was struck ‘when he went to separate the pakehas and the natives. Accused hit Kau with a stool on the head, but another man hit him first’; this witness later changed his story to say that it was the other man who had struck both blows. Timi Te Rua then deposed that Medhurst had struck both blows. Wainumi said she saw him struck by two men. George Ebert, the licensee,<sup>61</sup> describing his efforts to remove one Maori and being threatened with a knife, whereupon Piahana ‘came up to separate them, and threw witness down, kneeling on him’, provoking more fighting. Medhurst had not struck Piahana.

Having heard the evidence, the magistrate said there was no case against Medhurst and discharged him, along with a Maori who had been charged with being drunk and refusing to leave the hotel. ‘In giving his decision, he said the fault was on both sides, and particularly with the publican for giving them liquor until they were drunk’.<sup>62</sup>

## FAMILY LIFE

At the time of Piahana’s tangi, the *Te Aroha News* published a photograph of him with a young-looking wife.<sup>63</sup> He had at least two wives. Three children born between 1884 and 1888 had a mother named Mata or

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<sup>61</sup> See *Te Aroha News*, 18 September 1886, p. 2, advertisement, 4 December 1886, p. 3, Magistrate’s Court, 21 September 1889, p. 2.

<sup>62</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 24 October 1888, p. 2.

<sup>63</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 3 May 1910, p. 3.

Maata Kara or Mata Karma, also known as Paeroa.<sup>64</sup> In February 1891 she charged him with assault.<sup>65</sup> The newspaper report was brief, and managed to misspell both his names and give another version of hers. ‘Pihaua Kair charged with assaulting wife (Paeroa Mata) by striking her on face with clenched fist. After evidence taken, case is dismissed’.<sup>66</sup> He had pleaded not guilty.<sup>67</sup>

Presumably because his first wife either had left him or had died after 1891, he had six children born between 1894 and 1904 to Kahu, otherwise Kahu Ngakuru or Kahu Te Arero.<sup>68</sup> Another daughter, Ngauwira, named after their first child who had died in 1905, was born in 1908 or 1909.<sup>69</sup> Te Arani Kahu Ngakura, to give the name recorded in the court minutes in 1892, was 18 in that year.<sup>70</sup> At the time of Piahana’s death in 1910, she was described as ‘young’ and with ‘a fine well developed physique’.<sup>71</sup> She died in 1938, aged 61,<sup>72</sup> which would have made her 15 in 1892. Her father, a prominent member of Ngati Rahiri, was appointed as the local Maori policeman in the 1870s.<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> Church of Latter Day Saints, Record of Members, Early to 1919, Te Aroha Branch, nos. 28F, 80M; Record of Children Blest in the Te Aroha Branch of the New Zealand Mission, nos. 1M, 2F, 3F, 3M, 23M; Baptisms and Confirmations at Waharoa, no. 13, LDS Archives, Hamilton.

<sup>65</sup> Thames Magistrate’s Court, Criminal Record Book 1889-1893, 58/1891, BACL 13736/2a, ANZ-A.

<sup>66</sup> Police Court, *Thames Advertiser*, 7 February 1891, p. 2.

<sup>67</sup> Magistrate’s Court, *Thames Star*, 6 February 1891, p. 2.

<sup>68</sup> Church of Latter Day Saints, Record of Members, Early to 1918, Te Aroha Branch, nos. 86F, 87F, 90M; Record of Children Blest in the Te Aroha Branch of the New Zealand Mission, nos. 46F, 47F, 50F, 52M, 59M, LDS Archives, Hamilton; Church of England, Piako Marriage Register 1908-1943, entry for 4 May 1912, Anglican Diocesan Archives, Hamilton; Death Certificates of Rangi Whiua, 13 December 1918, 1918/9924; Rahiri Piahana Kau Hou, 1 September 1924, 1924/11570, BDM.

<sup>69</sup> Land Blocks, Aroha Block XII Section 46, H1073, Maori Land Court, Hamilton; Church of Latter Day Saints, Record of Members, Early to 1919, Te Aroha Branch, no. 86F, LDS Archives, Hamilton.

<sup>70</sup> Maori Land Court, Hauraki Minute Book no. 28A, p. 18.

<sup>71</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 3 May 1910, p. 3.

<sup>72</sup> Death Certificate of Kahu Ngakuru, 29 October 1938, 1938/31779, BDM.

<sup>73</sup> Armed Constabulary Force, Description Book, List of Native Constables Transferred from the Native Department, 1 April 1882, p. 232, Police Department, P 1/81, ANZ-W.

After Piahana's death, Rewi Mokena objected to Kahu being a co-trustee for some of the children. 'She is a dipsomaniac. My only reason is that'. After Te Keepa Te Arero, otherwise Keepa Karapuha,<sup>74</sup> responded that this was not true and that she was looking after them, he became a joint trustee with her.<sup>75</sup> Eight years later, all his eight surviving children were 'living with and supported by Wharepapa Ngakura their uncle'.<sup>76</sup> In 1917 he attempted to prevent some of their land being sold, but failed.<sup>77</sup> Kahu was probably by then married to Tame Pakauaongi.<sup>78</sup>

## DEATH

In mid-April 1910, the *Te Aroha News* announced that 'the Maori Rangatira Kau of Tui Pah is lying dangerously ill in the Hamilton Hospital'.<sup>79</sup> A week later, it reported that the 'great Maori Chief Kau' had died in hospital, and the body returned to Te Aroha for the 'great tangi'.<sup>80</sup> On 30 April, the tangi, 'which has been proceeding all the week', concluded, and 'the great chief' would be 'laid to rest and join the spirits of his ancestors'.<sup>81</sup> Despite his children entering the Mormon faith, Piahana remained an Anglican, and was buried with the rituals of that church, like one of his children in 1902.<sup>82</sup>

The *Te Aroha News*, which had not provided details of earlier tangi, either because readers were not interested or did not need the rituals

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<sup>74</sup> See Te Aroha Gold Field, Native Land Blocks 1880-1895, Karapuha's Block, p. 51, BAFV 13781/1a, ANZ-A.

<sup>75</sup> Maori Land Court, Hauraki Minute Book no. 60, p. 56.

<sup>76</sup> Maori Land Court, Hauraki Minute Book no. 66, p. 234; for the number of children surviving at the date of his death, see Hauraki Minute Book no. 60, p. 56.

<sup>77</sup> Block Files, Aroha Block IX Section 28 Lot 2A1A, Maori Affairs Department, Hamilton, BACS A102, 11159, ANZ-A.

<sup>78</sup> Death Certificate of Kahu Ngakuru, 29 October 1938, 1928/31779, BDM.

<sup>79</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 19 April 1910, p. 2.

<sup>80</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 28 April 1910, p. 2.

<sup>81</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 30 April 1910, p. 2.

<sup>82</sup> Church of England, Piako Maori Burials 1902-1910, entries for 25 September 1902, 30 April 1910, Anglican Diocesan Archives, Hamilton; for his children being Mormons, see Church of Latter Day Saints, Record of Members, Early to 1919, nos. 86F, 87F, 90M, LDS Archives, Hamilton.

explained, provided great detail about this one for a generation clearly less familiar either with tangi or hangi:

Although shorn of much of its old-time splendour, and suffering from the inevitable touch of burlesque consequent of the admixture of western notions, the ceremony was nevertheless sufficiently primitive to give some faint conception of its former significance. Hundreds of natives journeyed from different parts of the North Island to pay their respects to the dead Rangatira. Coromandel, Thames, Tauranga, Waikato and Bay of Plenty all sent contingents, and there has been much feasting and shedding of tears and enough Maori talk to cover the whole gamut of the language three times over.

The Chief's body lay in state in the porchway of the meeting house, in an oak coffin ornamented in gold, and covered with an all embroidered shroud. The nostrils and ears were stopped with wax according to the ancient custom to prevent the intrusion of evil spirits. Behind it was a portrait enlargement of the deceased heavily framed in gilt, and several smaller framed photographs of himself and wife. They were suspended on a background of flax and kiwi mats, and three large greenstone meres, heirlooms of old fighting day hung above. Beside the corpse, reclining on a heap of cushions, was his young wife, a fine well developed physique, though her features were swollen with grief. A bough of rimu (emblem of mourning) bound her dark tresses. Friends and members of the family came and wept with her in turn and with each other their hands clasped and noses pressed together. Sometimes the weeping would last for hours at a stretch, and the Western mind, which shudders at the exhaustion of hand shaking at garden party or reception, marvels at the sustained weeping of the unfortunate widow, which must be renewed in turn with each of her sympathisers, and continues day after day for a week. She, moreover, joined not in the feast, and appeared to take no rest or nourishment whatever.

Meantime, one after another of the braves of the tribe rose and emphatically descanted in their native tongue on the deeds and virtues of the departed, accompanying the recital with many vehement gestures and caperings until they would sink breathless on the ground. Each newcomer was treated to a recapitulation, while the guests sat around on the raupo mats they had brought with them, leaving a large open space for the speakers in full view of the mourning party by the corpse. It was the writer's good fortune to witness the reception of deceased's half-brother [Kahikate Uta],<sup>83</sup> who had journeyed from Opotiki. Long before he had appeared in sight he sent his voice on before

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<sup>83</sup> See whakapapa in Maori Land Court, Hauraki Minute Book no. 63, p. 157.

to announce his coming, which was answered by a welcoming "Haeremais." At length he hove in sight on the crest of the hill, attended by his followers, and advanced to the middle of the enclosure, where he halted. It was then seen that he was fashionably attired in a long black frock coat, stone grey trousers, pink tie, and brand new grey felt hat. He was greeted from the other side of the paddock by his half-sister [Mei Hou],<sup>84</sup> who acted as chief mourner and entered on a lengthy recital of the sad circumstances with her features distorted with grief and tears pouring down her cheeks. The poor creature's sorrow was harrowing to behold and her high pitched wailing was answered by a mournful chorus from the rest. The male individual showed his sympathy by rocking himself to and fro and wrapping himself up in his frock coat, making ejaculations of grief and distress. After an hour or so of this he ventured a little nearer the corpse and approached step by step as his emotion would allow, his dewy teardrops glistening and falling in the sunlight. Here each mourner was reinforced by another member of their own sex, the additional female mourner being picturesquely attired in a Scotch plaid, her hair bound with fresh rimu, and a branch of it in each hand, which she beat together. This renewed the drooping spirits of the mourners, and the painful recital was renewed with redoubled vigour, supported by a fresh outburst from the relations. The visitor's emotion, however, never permitted him to reach the corpse that day, and he still had fifty yards to go at sundown, and would therefore have to be all gone through again on the next day. During the progress of the recital hospitality on a liberal scale was dispensed to the visitors. Two long tablecloths were spread on the grass, each to accommodate 100 guests who sat alongside on the rush mats they carried with them. From the larder and kitchen, which was visible in the distance, presently emerged a procession of the women of the tribe, two and two, each carrying a plate of some yellow mixture which appeared to be cake but was subsequently discovered to be lumps of cheese. These women chanted a song of praise of the viands, which was answered by great expressions of satisfaction from the guests, who could not restrain themselves from cracking jokes in anticipation of the feast. A train of youths carrying great raupo kits between them filled with roasted pork brought up the rear. The smell of the pork was hailed with expressions and gestures of delight, unmistakable even to the lay mind, many of the guests as well as the waiters capering with joy, their faces wreathed with smiles, as in many a joking sally they indicated to all their sharpened appetites. Each of them fell to with a will on the viands allotted him which were as follows:- Plate of pork each (3 or 4lb), plate of kumaras, another of cheese, loaf of bread, and

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<sup>84</sup> See whakapapa in Maori Land Court, Hauraki Minute Book no. 63, p. 157.

large pot of tea. A few bottles were also placed at intervals on the tables presumably spring water to aid the digestion. Knives and forks were dispensed with, and tubs of roasted mussels were also served for all to help themselves. A few private parties elected to have their food turned into the large Maori eating kits, round which they sat and took in common.

Meanwhile the waiters brought the jointed carcass of a bullock and a cartload of bread, and deposited a heap by each party as evidence of “more to come,” so that all might feel assured of the Chief’s instituted hospitality. Having finished the meal, which in spite of its proportions lasted an incredibly short space of time – probably due to their being unhampered with knives and forks – the guests gathered the remains of the kits which they had brought with them for the purpose, and departed.

An inspection of the larder revealed the carcasses of four bullocks, from which the entrails had been removed, swinging intact from the boughs of trees. Pigs and sheep also dangled in a similar gory manner, and it was ascertained that the natives killed the beasts themselves. The meat had been roasted in maori cook-ovens – large holes dug in the ground, in which fires and lit and then filled with stones. The ashes are then raked out and the meat put on red hot stones and covered with sacks.

The natives drew their supplies from a great many different sources, but local shop-keepers supplied them with about £40 worth of groceries and 500 loaves of bread.<sup>85</sup>

Despite this illustration of his importance to Ngati Rahiri, the local newspaper could think of nothing to say about his career, and instead its obituary referred to his more interesting father, Hou. ‘The old chief, whose father fought in the Maori war, was born in Te Aroha. His father was one of the “bosses” of the mountain in the old days, when he held suzerainty over the chief of the plains, Tutuki’.<sup>86</sup>

## CONCLUSION

Although of illustrious whakapapa, to Pakeha he was just a labourer with an unfortunate weakness for alcohol (did he assault one wife when drunk?). Despite his status, he did not play a leading role in either Maori or Pakeha society, unlike his half brother (who shared his weakness).

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<sup>85</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 3 May 1910, p. 3.

<sup>86</sup> *Te Aroha News*, 28 April 1910, p. 2.